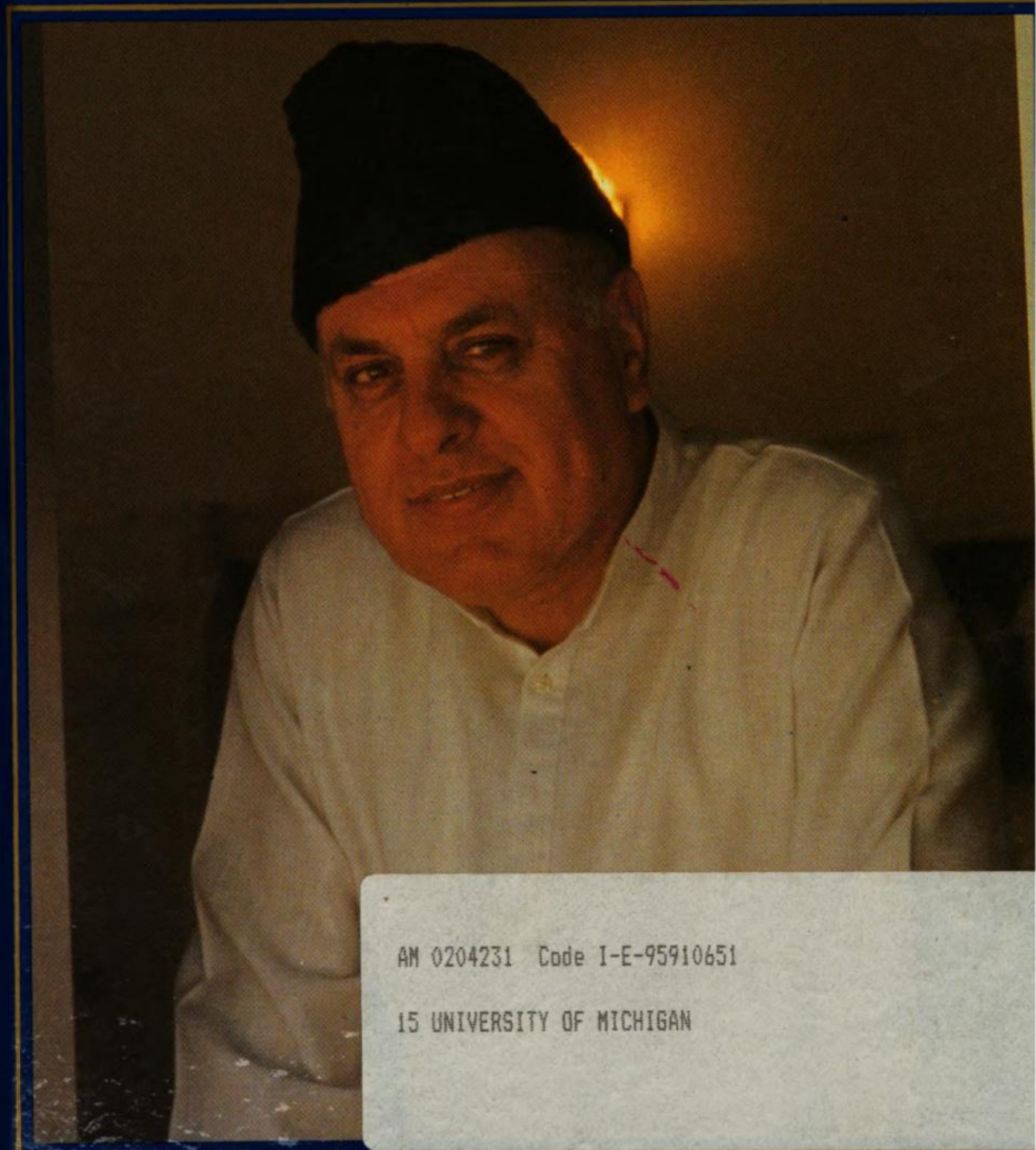


FAROOQ ABDULLAH

Kashmir's Prodigal Son



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A Biography

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ADITYA SINHA



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**to
the Valley
&
its People**

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I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my debt and heart-felt appreciation to a very special people — the Kashmiri Muslims of the Valley through whom I experienced *Kashmiriyat*. It was through them that I glimpsed the ineffable essence of their lives and their story.

Heading my list is the subject of this book — Farooq Abdullah. Through our numerous meetings in Delhi, Jammu and Srinagar my mind was opened to a lot of hitherto unknown facts.

Then there are the bureaucrats, ministers, politicians, journalists and police officers who served with Farooq, and with whom I spoke in detail. Many of them chose to remain anonymous; nevertheless, I must acknowledge my gratitude to them.

I also had several lengthy conversations with former Governor Gary Saxena, whose keen insight was extremely helpful in showing me the strategic framework in which Indian governance operates. A discussion with, and a reading of, Kashmiri historian Mohammed Ishaq Khan was vitally useful in laying down a framework for the history of the Valley.

Unfortunately, space will not permit me to list all the individuals I would like to include personally, so I simply say

to all those who know who they are but whose names do not appear here, Thank You!

I am beholden to the editors of my newspaper, who encouraged me to spend time researching the book, and then writing it.

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Aditya Sinha

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>vii</i>
1. Introduction	1
2. A History of the Kashmiri People	4
3. Oh Boy! Those Were the Days	15
4. The Impressionable Years	23
5. In His Father's Shadow	31
6. In and Out of Jail	40
7. A Dose of Medicine	47
8. The Holy Relic and Unholy Politics	60
9. A Trip to Pakistan	68
10. From Pakistan to "Azad Kashmir"	76
11. Rediscovery of India	94
12. The Rise of the Son	111
13. The Politics of Succession	123
14. In the Driver's Seat	139
15. The Odd Trio: Mhatre, Butt and Jagmohan	160
16. The Playboy Image	167
17. "Sleeping with the Enemy"	173
18. ISI: Proxy War Strategies	185
19. The Chilling Prophecy	197
20. Rubaiya's Kidnapping: Opening the Floodgates	216
21. Season of Massacres	225
22. Return of the Prodigal Son	232
23. The Future	240
<i>Bibliography</i>	<i>247</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>249</i>

Introduction

Since Kashmiri Muslims are at the vortex of politics in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, this book essentially focusses on the Kashmir movement, which arguably began in 1931 and entered a violent phase in 1989.

This volume traces the origins of the Kashmiri Muslim cultural identity, the prime motivating factor in Kashmiri politics. It is the protection of this cultural identity that defines the aspirations of this community.

The need to safeguard this identity came into sharper focus during the period of foreign rule, which began with the Mughals way back in 1586. Ultimately, the political forces threw up a leader named Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, who was the quintessential Kashmiri Muslim.

This writer contends that when Pakistan posed a threat to that unique Kashmiri identity in 1947, the Maharaja of Kashmir acceded to India. Subsequently, however, when

Sheikh Abdullah started to fulfil the aspirations of his community, particularly with his radical land reform programme, the disaffected former elite colluded with right wing elements in the capital of India and, in so doing, set into motion a process in which Delhi was seen to be threatening the cultural identity of Kashmiri Muslims.

The first step on Delhi's part was the toppling of the Sheikh Abdullah government in 1953, which was accompanied by an erosion of the special status of Kashmir. The process of disillusionment continued when Sheikh Abdullah, tired out by constant imprisonment, was coerced into ratifying such erosion through an accord in 1975, rather than insisting on institutional safeguards to retain the state's special status.

When Sheikh Abdullah's son and political successor, Farooq, sought to establish a measure of autonomy within these existing constitutional limits, by seeking to push these boundaries to the extent that was acceptable to the political mainstream in the rest of the country, Delhi employed dubious means to sack him.

The youth of the Valley interpreted this as Delhi's refusal to allow them to exercise their democratic rights to pursue the protection of their cultural identity even within the greater constitutional restrictions imposed in 1975. A process of deep alienation began, which gained significant ground when Farooq Abdullah entered into a political understanding with Delhi, with the very forces that had been hostile to his people's political aspirations. The proverbial straw that broke the camel's back was the rigging of the 1987 Assembly elections.

When the start of excesses and human rights violations in 1990 made it appear that India was intent on not only demolishing their cultural identity, but also their physical presence, Kashmiri Muslims *en masse* turned to the JKLF (Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front) as their political

representative, for it had, by then, begun to seem that the only way of protecting their identity was to obtain independence.

Neither Pakistan nor India favoured an independent Kashmir which, they feared, would become a den of intrigue right in the heart of Central Asia, South Asia, Russia and China. This book contends that both countries colluded to wipe out the bulk of the JKLF. With that, the liberation movement flagged.

Subsequent events alienated Kashmiri Muslims from Pakistan, as it became clear that the first thing Pakistan would do in Kashmir would be to wipe out their cultural identity. As the situation stands, both Kashmir and Delhi have been shadow-boxing for an honourable settlement, a process that was temporarily slowed down by the destruction of the symbol of the Kashmiri Muslim's spiritual identity, the *ziarat* (pilgrimage place) at Chrar-e-Sharief, in May 1995, during a stand-off between pro-Pakistan militants and the Indian Army.

Since this book revolves around the Kashmiri Muslim cultural and political identity, the person chosen to put forth various arguments is the best-known Kashmiri Muslim in the world, Farooq Abdullah. He has been directly involved in much of Kashmir's recent political history, and he is a highly controversial character. Also, and perhaps more importantly, he has the potential to play a significant role in the settlement of the Kashmir issue, in the future.

A History of the Kashmiri People

There is a sense of completeness in the history of Kashmir, given the composite culture that has evolved in the Valley. For Hindus of the subcontinent, history (in its pure sense) stops with Mahmud Ghazni of the Ghaznavid empire, only to re-emerge in the nineteenth century with Rammohan Roy; for Muslims, history only begins with Mahmud Ghazni. For the Kashmiris, however, there is no such polarisation in their history.

Legends of Kashmir's origins and stories of early times are recorded in Pandit Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* (River of Kings). The genesis of Kashmir is contained in a Hindu legend, which states that the Valley was a lake, hundreds of feet deep, named after Sati, the companion of Shiva, the most venerated deity in Kashmir. The lake became the abode of the guardian

Nagas, or snakes, from which many places in the Valley, such as Anantnag, Verinag, and Sernag, get their names.

An amphibious demon, so the story goes, started harassing the snakes. The father of the Nagas, sage Kashyap, became angry, and appealed to the Gods to save his children. The demon, however, could not be killed as long as he stayed underwater, so Shiva pierced the ring of mountains with his trident at what is now Baramulla. The water was drained, the demon exposed and crushed when a mountain, believed to be the modern-day Hari Parbat, was dropped on top of him.

The dried lake formed an oval-shaped valley, about 130 kilometres long and 40 kilometres wide. Archaeologists confirm that the Valley was once a lake and excavations show that the earliest traces of man date back to about 2400 B.C. The Nagas, who worshipped serpent deities, are presumed to be the aboriginals of the Valley, which was eventually invaded by the Aryans about 3000 years ago.

A Brahmanical system of society came into being, and the series of kings who reigned included rulers of the Mauryan empire. By the time the greatest Maurya king, Ashoka (273-232 B.C.), ascended the throne, however, the Brahmanical cult had become corrupt: the caste system was tyrannical, while superstition and ritualism were rife. As a result, Ashoka's reign saw the first social revolution in Kashmir, in which Buddhism, with its democratic and egalitarian gospel rapidly spread throughout Kashmir.

Buddhism, however, was not impermeable to corrupting influences either and finally a fusion of resurgent Brahmanical Hinduism and declining Buddhism resulted in Shaivism, which emerged as a monotheistic faith practised by most Kashmiris.

The next social revolution took place when mystic Persian sources, the most famous of which was Mir Sayid Ali Hamdani, spread Islam in Kashmir. However, Islam's introduction in the Valley predates Hamdani. It was Sayyid Sharifuddin, popularly known as Bulbul Shah, a Sufi saint

belonging to the Suhrawardi order, who actually introduced Islam to the Valley. It was at his behest that Rinchana, a Ladakhi who accepted Islam as his faith, adopted the name Sadruddin, and became the first Muslim ruler of Kashmir, founding the Sultanate in A.D. 1320.

The process of Islamic acculturation in Kashmir continued for a long time due to the regular contact with immigrants from Central Asia and Persia. The credit for its rapid spread, however, goes to Hamdani. Born in Iran, he visited Kashmir thrice, before his death in the area now known as Tajikistan. His most visible legacy remains the *Aurad-i-Fathiyya*, the invocatory prayer heard in the Valley's mosques and shrines, which even today is a ritual unique to Kashmiri Muslims in the Islamic world.

It was the Persian mystics who realised the important fact that Islam could only spread if it accommodated the local culture. Once that was achieved, there was no looking back. Sheikh-ur Alam is amongst those who oversaw the conversion of innumerable lower caste persons to Islam.

Shah Mir, who took the name Shamsuddin, consolidated the Sultanate during his three-year reign, which commenced in 1339. But, more importantly, Sufism crystallised in Kashmir with the emergence of an amazing woman, Lal Ded, towards the end of the fourteenth century. It was she who began protesting against the social decay of the Brahmanical caste system and its practices, and gradually attained prominence and respect. To date, her spiritual voyage represents the ethos of Kashmir.

Lal Ded and her disciple, Sheikh Nooruddin Wali (also known as Nund Rishi), became the apotheosis of all cultural streams in Kashmir. Sheikh Nooruddin "Kashmirised" Islam. His message of love made him a figure to be revered; his sayings were taken as prognostications, and his shrine, constructed in the town of Chrar-e-Sharief immediately after his death in 1442, became the spiritual centre and symbol of Kashmir's Muslims.

With Sheikh Nooruddin Wali, the Kashmiri Muslim identity took a concrete shape. The elements of *Kashmiriyat* came together and was strong enough to withstand all the foreign invasions, beginning with the Mughals in 1586. It was to protect this unique identity that Kashmiri Muslims insisted on retaining a special status within a culturally alien India. One can imagine then, the profound shock that each Kashmiri Muslim felt when Sheikh Nooruddin's shrine was destroyed on 11 May 1995.

Not unexpectedly, soon after this crystallisation in identity, came the climax of Kashmiri history: the fifty-year-long reign of Zainul Abidin, also known as Budshah, who ruled from 1420 to 1470. He persuaded all those who had been forcibly converted to Islam to return to their old faith. He abolished the *jizya*, the cremation tax, and banned cow slaughter. He repaired Hindu temples and built some new ones. He offered prayers five times a day and observed the Ramzan fasts. Through the establishment of a translation bureau, he made knowledge accessible to all those who knew either Persian or Sanskrit.

Most importantly, he introduced the arts and crafts for which Kashmir is now world famous. He invited craftsmen from Iran and Turkestan to teach his people various skills, and also sent Kashmiris to these countries to learn the arts of book binding, wood-carving, *pâpier-maché*, and making shawls, carpets and paper.

After the climax came the downfall, and the inevitable happened: disputes and inefficiency led to the demise of the Sultanate. With it, indigenous Kashmiri rule also came to an end.

The Mughals, who had invaded Kashmir a number of times, finally overcame Sultan Yusuf Shah in 1586. Akbar the Great first entered Srinagar in 1589. He extended his system of land revenue to Kashmir, which was administered by governors, and gradually introduced Persian as the official language. Saddest of all, Kashmir started to regress, culturally

and intellectually, due to the absence of local patronage. Kashmiris became the butt of epithets, and were called "crafty" "wicked" and "scoundrels". Since the Mughals did not induct Kashmiris into their armies, the people lost their martial abilities, and in time began to be known as "timid" and "cowardly" right until 1989, when their movement became violent.

Following the decline of the Mughal empire, Kashmir was conquered by the Afghans, who ruled from 1757 to 1819. This is considered the worst period in Kashmiri history, as the Pathans crossed all limits of decency. Not interested in the welfare of the people, the governors who came from Kabul squeezed every last paise from each Kashmiri in search of self-aggrandisement.

Despite the tyranny of the Pathans, it was during their reign that Kashmiri Pandits rose to the highest posts in the administration and became a permanent feature in the governance of Kashmir. Dynasties came and went, but the Kashmiri Pandits managed to remain ensconced in the power structure. Ironically, when the Kashmiri Muslims rebelled against this, they were branded as communal!

The Sikhs took advantage of the internecine squabbling among the Afghan governors. Generals Diwan Chand and Gulab Singh conquered Kashmir in 1819 for Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who thus added Kashmir to his kingdom. Under Sikh rule, the Jama Masjid in Srinagar was closed to prayers, and mosques such as Pather Masjid were turned into granaries. A number of Muslim families and individuals were deprived of their *jagirs* and the hereditary allowances they had been receiving since Mughal times. Like the Afghans, the Sikhs were merely interested in reaping the fruits of their military conquest.

The Sikh kingdom started to disintegrate after Ranjit Singh's death in 1839, and the British, on their return from their punitive Afghan expedition in the mid-1840s, defeated the Sikhs and put an end to their reign in Kashmir in 1846.

The British were helped by the Raja of Jammu, Gulab Singh, formerly an employee of Ranjit Singh, who had been installed there by the Sikh Maharaja in 1820.

Gulab Singh had already conquered Ladakh, Baltistan and Kishtwar in 1841. As a reward for his help in subduing the Sikhs, the British, through the 1846 Treaty of Amritsar, "sold" him Kashmir for 75 lakh rupees. Gilgit, which had been taken over by the Sikhs in 1842, was also handed over to Gulab Singh, and thus began the 100-year-long Dogra rule, considered the ebb of Kashmiri history.

During the Dogra regime, Muslims were targeted — politically, culturally, economically, and intellectually. The administration, which was mostly run by Kashmiri Pandits, proved to be corrupt, cruel, and exploitative.

In 1885, an exceptionally weak ruler, Pratap Singh, came to the throne. This made the British, who had by this time, established an empire in the subcontinent, worried about the Russians to the north, and in order to protect themselves, they deprived him of all authority and placed the state in the hands of a Council of Regency, under the control of the British Resident. The Council remained at the helm of affairs till 1921 and, during this period introduced a number of reforms. Communications, infrastructure, trade and industry were brought to the Valley. Most importantly, schools were started for Muslims, which slowly gathered momentum, and produced a restless Muslim population, with a growing political consciousness.

Influenced by the Indian National Congress party's *Khilafat* and Non-Cooperation Movement of the early 1920s, Kashmiri Muslims too demanded a redressal of their grievances. In a memorandum submitted to the Viceroy, Lord Reading, during his visit to Srinagar in 1924, leading Muslims demanded the abolition of forced labour, a larger representation of Muslims in government service, improvement in Muslim education, and the restoration of mosques that the government had taken over. Pratap Singh took harsh punitive measures against the

signatories. Consequently, tensions were running high when Hari Singh took over as Maharaja in 1925.

The new ruler appointed Sir Albion Bannerjee as his Prime Minister. Sir Albion, finding the conditions deplorable, resigned in 1929. During a visit to Lahore, he made the following statement:

In the State of Jammu and Kashmir, injustices of various kinds are prevalent. The Muslims, who form an overwhelming majority, are illiterate, steeped in poverty, and driven like dumb cattle. No rapport exists between the government and the people. There is no system to redress their grievances. Public opinion is not permitted. Newspapers are generally non-existent.

The root cause for this is the deplorable economic condition of the common people. The people of the State are exemplary citizens but they lack every comfort of life.

This statement was later read out at the Aligarh Muslim University by a Kashmiri student by the name of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. In the larger historical sense, he was the man who would be thrown up as a leader when the anger of the Kashmiri Muslims exploded. He became a leader in the true sense, as he channelled the expression of long pent-up feelings into a political organisation called the J&K Muslim Conference.

An incident of firing upon an agitated crowd of Muslims in Srinagar on 13 July 1931, in which 21 persons died, led to the establishment of the Glancy Commission, in which the grievances of the Kashmiri Muslims were officially recognised. The Muslim agitation, however, continued.

Since Kashmir was still a land with a composite culture, the need for a broader support base began to press on Sheikh Abdullah. In political terms, he saw it as a need to isolate the threats to his leadership, the most immediate of which was from the Mirwaiz of Kashmir, Maulvi Yusuf Shah, who was the religious leader of many Kashmiri Muslims, and in

a much lesser way, Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas, the leader of the Jammu Muslims, a culturally disparate group which, at some point, could have posed a threat to Sheikh Abdullah's leadership of the entire princely state of J&K.

Nudging Sheikh Abdullah along this path were two people: Pandit activist Prem Nath Bazaz, with whom there were parleys in 1933, and the INC (Indian National Congress) leader Jawaharlal Nehru, who first visited Kashmir in 1936, and with whom the Sheikh felt an almost immediate emotional and ideological identification. The two visits of the future Pakistani President, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, could do nothing to turn the tide of history, for his detached and calculating political style did not jell with the essence of *Kashmiriyat* that the emotional Sheikh Abdullah embodied.

As a result, the J&K Muslim Conference was converted to the J&K National Conference (NC) in 1939, with the expressed goal of winning over Hindu and Sikh residents of Kashmir to the movement. Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah and Ghulam Abbas were against this move, and kept the old organisation alive, bringing it ideologically closer to the All India Muslim League. This hardened the attitudes of Sheikh Abdullah and the Mirwaiz against each other, and started a political rivalry known as the *sher-bakhra* (lion-goat) rivalry, which would last for the next 50 years. Ghulam Abbas, however, was marginalised once the Jammu Muslims came under Pakistan's rule during the Indo-Pakistan war of 1947-48.

The NC then continued to be the overwhelming political voice of the Kashmiri Muslims, though it found itself unable to attract the support of other communities despite its change of name and decommunalised charter. It passed a resolution in October 1939, demanding responsible government, and in 1946, Sheikh Abdullah started the "Quit Kashmir" movement, drawing inspiration from the INC's "Quit India" movement of 1942. Maharaja Hari Singh let loose a reign of terror and Sheikh Abdullah spent most of his time in prison.

At the same time, the British, players in a historical process that began with the First World War and culminated with the Second World War, began to realise that they were no longer the leading global power. Economic problems finally forced them to shed their colonial possessions including the jewel in the crown, the British Indian empire. In their hurry to leave, they decided to partition the subcontinent. A Cabinet Mission, led by Sir Stafford Cripps, stated that British paramountcy over the 562 princely states, of which J&K was the largest, would lapse on Independence Day. Though the states would technically become free that day, the British Government made it clear that each had to choose between the two new dominions, India and Pakistan.

Hari Singh, dreaming of an Asian Switzerland, made no commitment when 14-15 August 1947 arrived. Thus, J&K, along with the states of Junagarh and Hyderabad, remained undecided on that day. Jinnah, the Governor-General of Pakistan, skilfully end-played the Indians. By inviting the Nawab of Junagarh to join Pakistan, despite the Hindu majority of the state population, and the fact that it was surrounded by Indian land on all sides, he established the precedent of using plebiscite as the method by which the wishes of the people could be determined in a state where the religion of the ruler was different from the vast majority of the population.

Simultaneously, however, ex-servicemen in Poonch, who formed part of the Jammu Muslim population, revolted against Dogra rule. Communal clashes also took place during this armed insurrection. Pathan tribesmen from the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) came to assist the rebellion, and they, as it later turned out, were used by Pakistan to transgress into Kashmir as well.

The tribesmen's excesses after they crossed Muzaffarabad and the Domel bridge, particularly in Baramulla, and the scare they generated as they approached Srinagar, forced Hari Singh to seek military help from India's Governor-General,

Lord Louis Mountbatten. The Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, declined to help till an Instrument of Accession was signed, and power handed over to a popular government, which expectedly would be led by Sheikh Abdullah.

Secretary to the Ministry of States, V.P. Menon, rushed to Jammu on 26 October 1947, and woke Hari Singh from his sleep. The Maharaja signed an Instrument of Accession and sent a letter to Governor-General Mountbatten requesting military help against the Pakistani invaders. He also agreed to set up an interim government with Sheikh Abdullah as the new Prime Minister. When Menon returned to Delhi with the Instrument of Accession, the cabinet ordered troops to be flown to Srinagar.

The Indian Army reached Srinagar, and pushed back the raiders. The tension escalated into a war between the two new dominions, and a cease-fire line came into effect from 1 January 1949. Notably, the Indian Army did not push beyond this line, which separated much of the Jammu Muslim areas, as well as the Gilgit and Baltistan areas, from the Kashmir Valley and the Hindu majority Jammu region. The Gilgit-Baltistan region was traditionally hostile to Srinagar, and out of the ambit of Sheikh Abdullah's influence. Jammu's Muslim majority areas had always threatened to provide the state with an alternative leadership, so their departure from India secured Kashmiri Muslim domination of J&K politics. As it happened, it was the Jammu Muslims who later dominated the government of "Azad Kashmir", as the part of J&K that was on Pakistan's side of the cease-fire line came to be known.

The Government of India, while accepting the Instrument of Accession, stipulated that it should be ratified by popular consultation. It has been stated by Maulana Mohammad Syed Masoodi, who was the NC General Secretary at that time, that Sheikh Abdullah had agreed to a full and final, unconditional merger with India, and that it was Nehru, with his concern for international opinion, who had insisted on a reference to

the people. The point is that the Kashmiri Muslim identity was so threatened by the Pakistan/tribal invasion that, at that time, they were ready to throw in their lot with India lock, stock and barrel.

On 5 March 1948, Hari Singh conceded full responsible government to the NC. Sheikh Abdullah became the Prime Minister, and the Constituent Assembly, subsequently elected in October 1951, besides ratifying the accession to India, agreed to safeguard the autonomy of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Article 370 of the Indian Constitution gave legal and constitutional validity to the accession and sought to define the state's special status within the Indian Union.

This essentially was the political safeguard that the Kashmiri Muslim sought for the protection of *Kashmiriyat* — his identity. For all other purposes Kashmir had become a part of India. Problems arose subsequently when Kashmiris began to perceive that India was reneging on preserving their special status and defending their unique identity. At a fundamental level, Kashmiri movements since then have not focussed as much on leaving India, as on defending their spiritual and political identity.

Oh Boy! Those Were the Days

Farooq Abdullah was born on 21 October 1937 in a village called Soura, then on the outskirts of Srinagar, though now within the city's municipal limits. He was the second of five children, born to Sheikh Abdullah and Begum Akbar Jahan, namely, Khalida, Farooq, Tariq, Mustafa and Suraiya of whom the eldest and the youngest were girls. Farooq's parents had been married in October 1933. Sheikh Abdullah had by then already shot into political prominence and was the President of the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference. Begum Akbar Jahan was a divorcee, with whom the Sheikh's marriage was arranged by Mufti Ziauddin of Poonch and, Dr. Mohammad Iqbal, a Kashmiri settled in Lahore.

Begum Abdullah is said to have possessed quite a mercurial personality in her youth. Kashmiris often attribute to this trait the reason for Farooq's "temperamental instability" In fact, all the three sons are said to have an eccentric streak running through them.

Begum Abdullah's mother was a Kashmiri girl from the Gujjar community of Gulmarg. Her family came from Shajimarg, which is near Tangmarg, the town located at the base of the famous holiday resort of Gulmarg. Her father was an Austrian named Michael Harry Nedou, the eldest son in a large hoteliering family which ran a chain of hotels in Srinagar, Lahore and Gulmarg, the prime tourist destinations of that time.

The story runs that Begum Abdullah's grandfather used to deliver milk from Shajimarg to the Nedous at their Gulmarg hotel every morning. One morning, Harry Nedou, relaxing outside the hotel, heard the enchanting sound of clinking bangles. He looked up and saw a girl bringing in the milk. It turned out that she was the milkman's daughter.

Harry impetuously proposed to the girl. He was rebuffed. Yet he was serious about making the girl his wife, and eventually converted to Islam, taking the name of Sheikh Ahmed Hussain. As a result the rest of the clan dissociated themselves from him. He, however, went into his own forestry business, and did quite well.

Their first born, Akbar Jahan, was convent educated. She grew up to be an adventurous young woman. She married, at an early age, a high priest of Bombay known as Karamat Shah, but the marriage did not last. She did not remain heart-broken for long though, as the Sheikh's friends approached Harry and suggested a match for his daughter. They told him that the prospective candidate, Sheikh Abdullah, was a teacher, who had recently entered politics. They asserted that he was a decent and educated man who, they felt, would go a long way.

The holy man attached to Harry's family, Pir Sahib, was summoned, and his verdict was that it was a good match. Harry, however, was unsure, as the future of a political person was at best uncertain. The Pir Sahib, nonetheless maintained that Sheikh Abdullah's future was extremely good, and that he would guide the destinies of people. What he needed, the Pir Sahib said, was someone at his side, someone who would be his backbone. After the marriage, Akbar Jahan settled down and was undoubtedly a stabilising influence on her husband. By Sheikh Abdullah's own account, "she proved a true friend and comrade" by introducing "order into (his) turbulent life"

Two years after Khalida's birth, Farooq was born, and apparently, contracted diphtheria as an infant. Doctors there at that time did not have penicillin, but with whatever antibiotics they had at their disposal, they managed to save the infant's life.

To escape the intense cold, Begum Abdullah used to take her family down to her father's house in Lahore every winter, where, if possible, Sheikh Abdullah would also join them. Summers were spent in Srinagar, with frequent trips to Harry's property in Gulmarg and Tangmarg. Farooq's earliest memory is of one such winter in Lahore, of his grandfather hiding sweets under the children's pillows. In the morning, the children would awaken and see that "Father Christmas" had left sweets under their sleeping heads.

As a child, life for Farooq was peaceful, as he remained unaffected by the political strife his father was embroiled in, though he retains a vague memory of the Second World War. Whenever excerpts of Hitler's speeches came over the radio, Begum Abdullah would frighten the children by telling them that Hitler, the dangerous man of the earth, was coming. The strategy proved to be quite effective for Farooq, at least. He became scared of Hitler (particularly his voice), and wondered if all the soldiers passing by in trucks would be enough to stop the German leader.

Farooq was a rugged child, an active one, and as mischievous as boys are apt to be. He loved to climb trees, and was fond of stealing apples and cherries from the gardens of people who had orchards near his various homes.

The children's interaction with their father was minimal. During the rule of Maharaja Hari Singh, Sheikh Abdullah was often in jail, and this remained the case right until India's independence in August 1947. When he became J&K's Prime Minister, he was so busy with the affairs of the government that his day used to start with the rising sun, and end only around midnight or beyond. He was busy in meetings, undertaking tours of the state or, the rest of the country, or visiting Delhi.

It was no surprise that Sheikh Abdullah showed no affection or concern for his family. He was totally besotted by Kashmir and its people. He thrived on their support; he was a total political being, who had sacrificed his personal life for the cause of the Kashmiri Muslim.

So Begum Abdullah had to play the role of both parents. If the children had any questions, they would ask their mother. They knew too that she was a softer person compared to their tough father, a man of few words, and one who would stand no nonsense. One had always to gauge his mood before addressing him and his children, particularly Farooq, perceived him as tyrannical.

Such was the fear that as soon as the time came for Sheikh Abdullah to come home, Farooq and the others, after a day of boisterous fun and mischievous pranks, would drop at Begum Abdullah's feet and beg for forgiveness, entreat her not to tell their father, and promise to never repeat their wild behaviour. Their kind-hearted mother would agree.

Nonetheless, Farooq did not escape being beaten by Sheikh Abdullah. The first beating came one winter when Farooq was caught eating icicles. The children loved eating icicles, but as they would inevitably suffer throat trouble as a result, their father had forbidden them from doing so.

Farooq, however, remained undeterred by threats, until one day he was caught and given a thorough beating. Whether or not he learned his lesson is uncertain, but as the eldest son, he did receive the maximum number of whippings meted out by Sheikh Abdullah.

One instance that Farooq remembers is when he was caught smoking. Although Sheikh Abdullah himself smoked like a chimney, he was angry to find his son, who was only in high school, doing so. A thorough thrashing cured Farooq of this habit forever.

Farooq was also occasionally beaten by his faithful servant Ahmed Ganai, who was called Amma by the family. During Sheikh Abdullah's long absences, he played the role of guardian for the children, particularly for the truant Farooq who, instead of showing up for school, would be more inclined towards a boating adventure with friends in the nearby Dal Lake. Amma would catch hold of Farooq, thrash him soundly and deliver him back to school.

The primary school that Farooq went to was the only school in his neighbourhood, located at the octroi post, about 300 metres from his house. One thing soon became evident: Farooq was not fond of school or of studying. His inability to concentrate or ponder too deeply would make him an easy target for his political opponents later in life.

There were only two teachers in the school. Farooq relates a quaint story about those days. The day used to end at 4 p.m., but no one in the school had either a watch or a clock. They realised it was 4 o'clock only when they heard the mail bus to Kangan (on the Kargil road) returning from its trip. The bus had a reputation for punctuality. It used to pass the school at exactly 4 p.m. every day, and when it did, the school bell, signifying the end of the day, would ring.

After primary school, Farooq attended a mission school in Fatehkadal, in Srinagar. The mission school was about five miles from home, so Farooq and the others went to, and returned from, school by tonga. By this time, he was aware

that his father was in politics, and that he was fighting against the Maharaja. Yet, he was often happy that his father was in jail, as that meant he could have a whale of a time with no unhappy consequences! But that was the extent of the influence of politics on his day-to-day affairs, for general political awareness in any case, was minimal.

The people's poverty was overwhelming, and many of them did not even know what the Kashmiri Muslim struggle that Sheikh Abdullah was spearheading was all about. This was in sharp contrast to the situation 50 years later, when every child and every labourer in the Valley was aware of every detail of the politics that affected Kashmir's post-1947 history — about the Instrument of Accession, the UN resolutions, Indo-Pak rivalry and US interests in the Valley. This awareness is the legacy of the movement which threw up, and was, in turn, led by, Sheikh Abdullah.

During this time, Sheikh Abdullah was in prison for organising the Quit Kashmir movement. The family would visit him in the Badami Bagh Army Cantonment prison as often as they were permitted by Hari Singh. Farooq would go and chat with his father. He did not really understand what the problem was, or why his father was in prison. All he knew was that he could occasionally visit him and answer his questions about his school, his studies and his sports, and share some food with him.

While Sheikh Abdullah was in and out of prison, two historical figures whom Farooq would never see again, visited Srinagar. One was Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who would later be known as Pakistan's Quaid-e-Azam, and the other was M.K. "Mahatma" Gandhi, the father of the Indian nation. Each left a different impression upon the young Farooq's mind.

Jinnah came first, and was received with a big reception by Sheikh Abdullah in Srinagar. Farooq was a young boy who found himself on the stage, watching the guest as he was garlanded. Jinnah was well dressed and Westernised to the core and he impressed Farooq thoroughly. Jinnah, in the

young boy's perception, was a person even more important than the Maharaja and certainly more important than anybody Farooq had ever seen before. The reception that Jinnah got seemed to confirm his impression.

But suddenly after that, there was no more news of Jinnah. He just seemed to have disappeared. The reception had been so grand, so full of joy and hope, and then suddenly there was no more talk of him; he was never mentioned and it was as if the whole thing had never happened.

What went wrong, in fact, was Jinnah's attitude. Somehow, he and Sheikh Abdullah never jelled. Abdullah's hobnobbing with the Congress leadership led Jinnah to believe that he could not be trusted. At that point of time, however, Abdullah was the champion of Kashmiri Muslim identity and anti-autocratic rule, unlike the breakaway Muslim Conference of Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah and Chaudhury Abbas. Jinnah made a big miscalculation; but then, individuals are rarely able to change the tides of history: Kashmiri Muslim identity was more inclined to favour the secular Congress than the Muslim League, which might have been secular underneath, but at the time was fighting for a separate Islamic nation, an idea that did not go down well with the composite culture of the Valley.

Of course, Farooq did not understand all this at the time. He heard that Jinnah had become a *persona non grata* with his father and with the party, and he realised some bitterness had crept in, but he did not know the reason.

Mahatma Gandhi visited Begum Abdullah at the family house. Farooq's mother and Khalida made a great fuss about the impending visit, and the boy's expectations of the greatest nationalist leader were heightened.

When he saw the Mahatma, however, he was disappointed. Scantily clad and holding on to a stick for support, the Mahatma looked anything but great. To nine-year-old Farooq, greatness was manifest in the pomp and show of the Maharaja, for whose passage the road had to be closed

and the security forces put on alert. Why, the Maharaja was even physically bigger than the Mahatma! Farooq looked at his feet: he wore no proper shoes, merely old chappals.

The Mahatma, however, spoke, and when he did, it was softly and after choosing words with great care. For a moment, the young Farooq stopped looking at the Mahatma's exterior, and through the medium of the Mahatma's voice and words, was able to get a peek at Gandhi's profound inner depth. It became a permanent memory.

The Impressionable Years

After the mission school, Farooq attended the Tyndale Biscoe School to do his matriculation. It was a Christian missionary school, known at that time as the Hedo Memorial School, located just behind Pratap Park in the heart of Srinagar. Farooq's years at this institution are important in understanding the influences that were at play during his character's formative period.

The school had a motto: "They say what they say, let them say what they say, for they say what they say. And in all things be men." Farooq has generally taken heart from this motto whenever he has had to face rumours as he did even when he was Chief Minister. In the beginning, it was the Congress party's allegations about his womanising, and later, the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami's insinuations that he was a bad Muslim.

Biscoe School was much to Farooq's liking, as there was a balance between intellectual and physical education. Needless to say, Farooq enjoyed the outdoor activities such as sports, climbing, swimming, and boating more. It is here that the qualities of leadership were instilled in him: though bored by his books, he revelled in taking decisions. For instance, when the class went for hikes in the hills, children would often get stuck but no crying for help was allowed — each was left to his own resources to get out of the situation.

It was here that Farooq learned the meaning of companionship. Because of the hiking camps, and the week- or fortnight-long camps in various places to which they went, bonds developed between the boys, and each learned to fend for himself: whether it was cooking for oneself, pitching one's own tent, or carrying one's own luggage. Most of the friendships developed then were to become lifelong ones.

Farooq's best friend was a Kashmiri Pandit, Krishan Bakaia. His father, a teacher, had adopted Krishan from his brother. The two boys were extremely good swimmers. (There was a swimming pool in the school itself.) Also, every Tuesday they went to a regatta in the Dal Lake, where they boated, swam and competed in cross-lake races. Krishan was later to join the Army, and ironically, be posted to Kashmir during the armed movement of the 1990s.

A lot of Farooq's friends were Punjabis. They were mostly from the business community, and Farooq befriended many of them because they played the same games as he, or they were as dull at their studies as Farooq was. None of his friends entertained any pretensions of intellectually overpowering any of the others; as a result of which Farooq never felt that he did not belong merely because he was such a poor student.

And, naturally, Farooq had friends who, like himself, were Kashmiri Muslims. One friend, Sheikh Javed, became an extremely close friend, so much so that after his death, political opponents linked Farooq to Javed's wife. The point is that Farooq had no dearth of friends; the composite culture

of the Valley was second nature to him, and besides, he had no airs about being the Prime Minister's son.

His gang of friends consisted of pranksters — outgoing, naughty, and full of mischief. For instance, once a Russian film was playing at the Palladium Cinema, near the mission school, in Lal Chowk in Srinagar (the hall has since been burned down). As part of the Soviet propaganda of that time, admission to the film was free. Like any group of students on the subcontinent, Farooq and his friends could not pass up an opportunity to watch a foreign film, and that too, one which was free.

The only hurdle, however, was the Australian Principal, Phil Edmonds, who forbade his students from going to see the film.

Principals, however, are hardly personalities who daunt impish students, and the gang members decided that they would go for the 11 o'clock show. They figured that the principal would not notice their absence; and, in any case, they figured that they would be back at school for the post-lunch session.

Principals, however, are an experienced band of men and more intelligent than their more mischievous students give them credit for. Edmonds took a snap rollcall, and found that a number of students had disappeared.

Farooq and his friends were sitting in the cinema hall, enjoying themselves, when suddenly they heard someone enter the auditorium, speaking in English with an Australian accent. The usher flashed his torch in the direction of where the students sat.

The minute the students saw Edmonds, they began fleeing. They had been sitting in the first-class seats: they jumped over the seats in front of them till they reached the second class, and continued jumping over the seats in front of them till they were past the third-class section and near the exit. They got out of the door and ran back to the school.

The principal finally returned to school, and made the entire class line up in front of the building. Passing each student, he asked each one that had been missing at the snap rollcall, to take a step forward. He then asked each student where he had been.

When Farooq's turn came, he replied, "Sir, I was here."

"Where were you when we had a rollcall? What were you doing?"

"Sir, I was in the toilet."

"No, you were not in the toilet," the principal replied. "You're cooking up a story. We checked in the toilets too."

"But Sir, I was in the toilet," Farooq insisted. "The person checking perhaps did not notice."

The principal was no fool, however, and not only did the boys get caned on their palms, but they were also made to stand on their desks for an hour. Yet, Edwards was no totalitarian, and he accepted that in the absence of hard proof, the boys may not have been in the cinema. So the punishment he meted out was for not being present at the rollcall. It was more in the nature of a warning.

Strangely, the warning worked, for Farooq and his gang did not break any major rules of the school after that day. They decided that come what may, one obeys.

At home too, Farooq was the naughtiest child, and certainly the bane of his elder sister Khalida's life, who used to study in a girls' school in Fatehkadal, but went with the boys in the tonga from Soura to Mujahid Manzil, which was their common meeting point.

Her best friend at the time was Ghulam Mohiuddin Karra's daughter, Mahmooda. Together, they attended home science classes where they learned how to cook. Khalida had to take from home the ingredients such as semolina (*sujji*), from which she made halwa, which, even though it was rock-hard and awful-tasting, Farooq would steal, reducing her to tears.

Similarly, once Mahmooda came to stay with the family in Soura. The two girls painstakingly made samosas, specially

intended for the head of the family. When they were not looking, however, Farooq stole the *samosas* and ate them. Khalida was inconsolable, and felt no better even after knowing that Farooq had received a sound thrashing from their father.

While Farooq was the naughtiest in the family, Tariq was very studious, introverted, and brilliant in his studies. His urge to read books was overpowering. Once, when the family went to Allahabad in the mid-1950s, while Sheikh Abdullah was in jail, they visited Nehru's house. There, Tariq, on going to the library, was completely taken by the collection of books and, on their return to Delhi, asked Nehru if he could read Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Nehru later sent him the book, which Tariq read and returned.

There is a story from Farooq's Biscoe School days, an apocryphal one, concerning Farooq and his father. Farooq and about 100 other students from his school had taken the entrance examination to the Sri Pratap (SP) college, and were anxiously awaiting the results, which were to be announced by the university.

As it happened, Sheikh Abdullah was the university's Pro-Vice-Chancellor; the Chancellor was the Sadar-e-Riyasat Dr. Karan Singh, the son of Hari Singh, who was nominated to the post of head of state after Sheikh Abdullah abolished hereditary rule, thus ending the Dogra regime.

Normally, the results were announced on Radio Kashmir, which was then under the state administration's control, unlike the radio stations in the rest of India, which were under the direct control of the Government of India. The result sheets went from the university to the radio station, and at 5 p.m., the announcers started broadcasting the roll numbers of successful candidates. It was presumed that the roll numbers that were not read out had either failed or had got compartments. The radio announcement did not include the details; what division a candidate had attained could be known only through the school.

The other alternative was to go to the Srinagar Khidmat Press, where the result book was kept, and where, on payment of four annas, somebody would look up and then write down, on a scrap of paper, the result and division of the student. For further details, one had to go to the registrar's office.

The day that Farooq's results were to be announced, Sheikh Abdullah came home for lunch. Since he was the pro-VC, he carried with him an envelope, in which the result sheet was enclosed. He left it on the dining table as he got busy with his meal.

The three students in the house, Farooq, Tariq, and their cousin Nazir, got excited. (Sheikh Nazir Ahmed was the son of Sheikh Abdullah's eldest brother, Sheikh Mohammad Maqbool). After his father's death, Nazir had come to live with Farooq's family. This had been only natural as when Sheikh Abdullah was growing up, it has been Sheikh Maqbool who had looked after him, since their father, Sheikh Mohammad Ibrahim, had died just two weeks before Sheikh Abdullah's birth. Thus, Maqbool had been responsible for Abdullah's education, to the extent that he had insisted on Abdullah carrying on his studies rather than going into the shawl business, as their step-brothers had been demanding. (Nazir was to later become the General Secretary of the NC.)

So Nazir and Farooq could not contain their excitement, realising that it would only be minutes before they knew their results. More importantly, they would be able to show off and let each of their friends know his result too, without waiting till 5 p.m.

As soon as Farooq touched the envelope, however, Sheikh Abdullah slapped his wrist. "Read what is written on the envelope", he commanded the boys. It read: "Caution. To be opened at 5 p.m."

Farooq became indignant, and argumentative. His father, however, stood his ground. "What it says, we obey," he told his impatient son. "And you will not open this till 5 p.m."

So the result lay there in the envelope, on the table, as the boys sat down to eat, unable to take their eyes off the envelope. Time dragged on, but soon it was five o'clock.

At 5 p.m., Farooq had the audacity to switch on the radio and turn in to Radio Kashmir. Sheikh Abdullah was taken aback. "What are you doing?" he asked.

"We're putting on the radio."

"What for?"

"We want to hear the results."

"But why? Now you can open the envelope."

Farooq was adamant. "No, now we will listen to it on the radio." His ego had been hurt. His age made him rebellious, and he wanted to pay his father back in the same coin.

But Sheikh Abdullah, angry now, bellowed: "Come on, I'm telling you, open it and see, and let me know."

No one could hope to take on Sheikh Abdullah and win. So the boys opened the envelope and turned to their school's results. First Nazir's roll number came up, then Farooq's. They had passed.

Sheikh Saheb hugged them both. He brought out some sweets, and congratulated the boys. He then announced that Farooq would pursue medicine, while Nazir would study engineering.

The boys then took their bicycles (Sheikh Abdullah had bought them bicycles and raincoats, so that no matter what the weather, they would have no choice but to cycle to school), and rushed to the place where their friends were attempting to find out their results. Students were climbing over one another to find their roll numbers and a feeling of pride and accomplishment swept over Farooq when he showed them the result sheet.

After matriculation, Farooq went to SP College, from where he obtained his intermediate degree, then called the F.Sc., following which he went to medical school.

While he was in the 11th grade, one day, Farooq was seized by the desire to watch an English film. A Western was

playing. The show timings were, however, inconvenient. English films at the Regal cinema featured as the late show, and ran from nine o'clock at night. Sheikh Abdullah was against his children going to late movies. He felt that for children who had to go to school or college, for children who had to study, that was no time to watch films. Disobeying his father's rules, however, Farooq sneaked out of the house.

The Prime Minister checked on his son, and found him missing. He waited till Farooq returned, and then gave him the beating of his life.

The young man was incensed, and refused to speak to his father, or even to recognise him. He maintained his distance for two months.

One afternoon, when Farooq returned from college, he bumped into his father who was sitting in the garden. Sheikh Abdullah caught hold of his son and asked him what he had studied that day.

Farooq mumbled something.

His father looked at his son, kissed him and said, "look I'm sorry I lost my temper. Work hard, you've a long way to go."

In His Father's Shadow

Towards the end of Farooq's days at the Fatehkadal school, Sheikh Abdullah was released and put in charge of the emergency administration. His foremost problem at the time was dealing with the entry of tribals from the NWFP into the valley, and its potential consequences.

As far as Farooq was concerned, the period when these tribals, as also security forces, entered J&K was one full of surprises and excitement, as it must have been for the majority of Kashmiris. For the first time, the young boy saw dark, six-foot men with rings around their turbans. He was told that they were regulars of the Indian Army's Patiala regiment who had come to fight the invading Pathans.

As with most other Kashmiris, the tribal invasion and the Indian response to it occasioned the first time that Farooq saw airplanes. Having only heard about aircraft on the radio, Farooq did not miss a chance to accompany his father, or

his father's top officials, to the airport to watch the Dakotas land, and to see the ferrying of soldiers.

Sheikh Abdullah was a busy head of government. He was constantly on the move to see how things were progressing. His office used to be where the Broadway Hotel stands today at Regina. His family stayed in a house right behind it, where the MLAs' (Members of the Legislative Assembly) hostel is now located.

The tribals had come to the outskirts of Srinagar city, near where the HMT (Hindustan Machine Tools) factory now stands, at Shahdeng. They were stopped and repulsed at the Chattarbal bridge. Being a child, Farooq asked someone where the Maharaja's troops were. He was told they had run away, and that was why the Indian troops had had to come.

This period was full of activity for Sheikh Abdullah and he hardly averaged two to three hours of rest each night. Even Begum Abdullah was occupied with trying to quell the rumour in the *mohallas* (localities) that the tribals were about to enter Srinagar and murder everyone.

In the middle of 1948, when the tribal raiders were still being pushed back, it was decided that the family would leave Srinagar until things cooled down. Begum Abdullah decided to visit her brother, Harry junior (whose Muslim name was Ghulam Qadir), who was a colonel in the army of the Maharaja of Indore.

On the way to Indore, the family stopped in Delhi and Sheikh Abdullah took his family to see Louis Mountbatten in Government House (which later became Rashtrapati Bhavan). While they waited in a small room, Farooq could hear someone dictating a letter in flawless English in the adjoining room. The walls echoed with the majesty of that elocution. Mesmerised by that voice, the family was ushered into Mountbatten's room.

The first person Farooq saw was Edwina Mountbatten. Her husband was still a Viscount, but all the same, he was, in Farooq's estimation, an impressive man, British to the core,

and the one whom they had heard speaking the language so beautifully. In the background stood the militia, the soldiers and the commanders. Farooq was certain that he was in the presence of a very superior being.

The family next called upon the Prime Minister of India. At that time Jawaharlal Nehru did not live in Teen Murti House, which was then the residence of the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army. At Nehru's 9, York Road, New Delhi residence (later renamed Motilal Nehru Marg) Farooq met Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit's daughter, Tara (Nayantara), and tripped over the paddle-cars belonging to the children of Indira Gandhi, Nehru's daughter. The family also met Mahatma Gandhi at Birla House. It was just days before the Mahatma's assassination on 30 January 1948. Farooq recalls being given thin and crispy sweet-bread to eat.

Sheikh Abdullah dropped his family at Indore and returned to Srinagar. At Indore, Farooq wondered why the Maharaja had abandoned Kashmir. Obviously, he could not face the tribals, and, therefore, to save himself, had fled. Farooq could not understand how a man who was a Maharaja could run away. For a long time he refused to believe that a man with so much glory, and the head of the army, could chose to escape.

It was only when Farooq next saw Hari Singh that the fast-moving events in Kashmir began to dawn on him. It was at a reception at Shalimar Bagh, in Srinagar, in 1950. Nehru, Hari Singh, and some officials from the United Nations were present. Nehru, Hari Singh, and the UN... Farooq understood that something significant was happening.

What was happening, in fact, was that Sheikh Abdullah, the symbol of the Kashmiri Muslim political identity, had begun to assert himself. He had implemented his "Naya Kashmir" programme, the mainstay of which was revolutionary land reforms. A ceiling on land holdings was rapidly introduced which abolished 396 big *jagirs*, and

400,000 acres of land were taken from a little over 9000 landowners. About 200,000 peasants were given property rights over the land they tilled.

The only trouble with the reforms was that while the beneficiaries were the Kashmiri Muslims, the losers were the Kashmiri Pandits. For the latter, such a process was the symbol of all that was going wrong in Kashmir: they were losing the influence they had held over the centuries, no matter that the power they wielded was disproportionate to their numbers in the population.

The Pandits also wielded an inordinate influence in New Delhi. This was not surprising, as Nehru himself was a Kashmiri Pandit, though his ancestors had left the Valley long before. The resentful Pandit coterie in Delhi started projecting Sheikh Abdullah in a different light. They averred that he was out to persecute and communalise them, and that he was anti-national. This produced the expected backlash in Delhi.

Sheikh Abdullah reacted sharply. Suddenly, he began to feel that neither he nor his people, the Kashmiri Muslims, were secure. That, in fact, is where all the problems began to take root.

One of the people Farooq saw at the reception in 1950 was Sir Owen Dixon, the UN representative who eventually put forward proposals under which the state would be partitioned between India and Pakistan, with the respective parts going to the dominion of their known preference, while a plebiscite would be held in the Valley to decide which side it wanted to join.

Dixon's presence was the result of India having gone to the UN to complain that Pakistan-supported tribals had invaded the state, which had acceded to India. The UN Security Council passed a three-part resolution in which first, Pakistan was to clear the state of raiders; then, India would withdraw the bulk of its forces in stages; and lastly, a plebiscite would be held to determine whether J&K would go to India or Pakistan.

In those first few years after independence, Kashmiri Muslim identity had been intact in India, and a plebiscite then would have solved the problem once and for all. Yet, the growing insecurity that Sheikh Abdullah had begun to feel, with regard to Delhi, chipped away at that confidence. There were two forces at work on the coterie in Delhi: first, those annoyed with the land reforms and its potential effect on the rest of India; and, second, the communalists, who wanted the immediate merger of Kashmir with India. To them, the thought of a distinct and protected Muslim identity within India, particularly after partition, was anathema. People of this school of thought were egged on by those desiring revenge against the Kashmiri Muslims for having "usurped" power.

The coterie, symbolised by men such as D.P. Dhar and the dispossessed Dr. Karan Singh (who always felt that Sheikh Abdullah had been responsible for throwing his father, Hari Singh, out of J&K) represented a historical force that Nehru could not overcome, despite the signing of the Delhi Agreement in 1952, which safeguarded Kashmir's autonomy. Sheikh Abdullah's fault, perhaps, was that he chose to ignore the fact that Nehru was fighting battles bigger than Kashmir. Representing the secular school of thought within the Congress, Nehru was desperately trying to overcome the powerful manoeuvres of the right-wing members of his party, represented by Home Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and organisation strongman Purushottam Das Tandon.

In this context, the pin-pricks Sheikh Abdullah and the Kashmiri Muslims were receiving were, perhaps, not perceived as significant, for the battle which Nehru was fighting was larger, and one on which hinged the future of India. If Sheikh Abdullah had, at that point, felt that since he had joined India, he should either sink or swim with the country, things might have been quite different.

As it happened, when things started to sour between him and Delhi, Sheikh Abdullah's reaction was extreme. He moved further and further to a point where Nehru became

helpless and could no longer defend him (or the Kashmiri Muslim's cause), because he (Nehru) was too busy defending himself (and the secular cause). Not fully comprehending this, Sheikh Abdullah, in April 1952, in a speech at Ranbir Singh Pura, said: "We have acceded to India in regard to defence, foreign affairs and communications in order to ensure a sort of internal autonomy.... If our right to shape our destiny is challenged and if there is a resurgence of communalism in India, how are we to convince Muslims of Kashmir that India does not intend to swallow us?" As expected, Delhi did not take this statement in a constructive context.

Another irritant to Delhi was the visit of US Presidential candidate, Adlai Stevenson, who came to the J&K Prime Minister's house for lunch (and struck Farooq as the stereotypical Yankee). Stevenson was to return to Delhi to meet Nehru, but the weather over the Banihal pass (connecting Kashmir with Jammu) was inclement, and delayed his flight. Stevenson spent the extra time at Sheikh Abdullah's house, having tea with the Prime Minister, with no one to listen in on their conversation.

To Delhi, this appeared as if Sheikh Abdullah was hobnobbing with the Americans; that he was perhaps making a deal to secure the independence of Kashmir. India felt that the Western superpower, on its part, coveted the Valley because of its strategic Central Asian location. This point in history marked an ebb in the relations between Srinagar and Delhi.

Farooq realised his father was embattled sometime in 1952, after the Delhi Agreement, when he heard talk in his college that his father had sold Kashmir.

One day, a very simple boy at the college, whose family was so poor that he could only afford to wear pajamas, not trousers, walked towards Farooq in the sports field. Coming up to Farooq, and looking him straight in the eye, he said: "Your father has sold us."

Farooq asked him what he was talking about. The boy replied that although Farooq was unaware of what was happening there was, in fact, a simmering resentment in the Valley.

For Farooq this was a bolt from the blue. Something was obviously wrong, he realised, but he did not dare talk about it with his father. Instead he shared his misgivings with his mother.

Begum Abdullah, on the other hand, refused to enlighten her son about what was happening, but assured him, instead, that things would be alright.

Farooq, however, kept on hearing things. Most of the talk originated from his Muslim friends, who said that they were growing disgruntled with Sheikh Abdullah because he had sold the conscience of the people. Farooq did not know too much about the Delhi Agreement, but he became aware from the Muslims, particularly the educated class (who discussed these things with their children), that there was a battle going on between Sheikh Abdullah and Delhi. There was talk that the Prime Minister would be arrested; there were even rumours that he was going to be murdered.

Many of the boys close to Farooq were fairly blunt about it. The Pandits, however, never uttered a word.

The atmosphere further deteriorated with a famine that year. There had been a number of bad seasons in the Valley, resulting from poor rainfall and scarcity of adequate water, but people tended to blame the Prime Minister, or his Food Minister, Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg, for the unhappy situation. Sheikh Abdullah implored his people to eat potatoes and corn porridge and, in his own house also, this diet was adhered to as rice was rationed.

Yet close by, in the house of Deputy Prime Minister Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, an NC stalwart and once a trusted lieutenant of Sheikh Abdullah, lavish feasts were being cooked. Farooq remarked to his mother how strange it was that while in the Deputy Prime Minister's house, every day a

pakwan was being cooked, in the Prime Minister's house, they were not even getting a normal meal.

Tariq overheard him and, in innocent mischief, he repeated what Farooq had said to their father, at the breakfast table the next morning. Sheikh Abdullah quietly rose from the table and in silent anger left the house.

After that, Farooq never sat at the table; he would go into the kitchen, quickly have his breakfast and run off. Lunch and dinner were no problem, because they never saw their father anyway — he was always in meetings, which went on late into the night.

Then came the fateful night when Shyama Prasad Mookherjee, the Jan Sangh leader, died. He had been to Sheikh Abdullah's house in happier times. Despite being a vegetarian, he enjoyed lunch with the Abdullahs, and always complimented the food, particularly enjoying the *saag* (gravy). He had struck Farooq as a good man.

On the night of 23 June 1953, however, the telephone rang. It used to be kept in Farooq's room, and if the call was important, he would take the phone in to his father. This particular phone call was from Health Minister Sham Lal Saraf, who wanted to speak to his Prime Minister urgently.

Farooq knocked on his father's door. "*Haan, kya hai?*" (yes, what is it?) his father inquired from inside. Farooq told him that the Health Minister was on the line.

While Sheikh Abdullah spoke on the phone, Farooq stood at his side to take the telephone back once the conversation was over. He heard Saraf suffer the full blast of Sheikh Abdullah's temper. When did this happen? he asked. Did you inform the Government of India? Did you inform his family? You hadn't even told me about his condition.

When he put down the phone, Farooq asked his father what had happened. Mookherjee had died, he replied. The following day, a great commotion broke out.

The day Sheikh Abdullah was arrested was a Sunday. Farooq was a member of the J&K Cadet Corps which is today

a part of the National Cadet Corps (NCC), and had gone for a two-week camp at Wayul in the Sind Valley of Srinagar. The camp was held near the Wayul bridge that led to Kangan. The cadets underwent the routine drills, learning how to use firearms, clean weapons, etc.

Farooq was in uniform that day because if you were in the Cadet Corps uniform on a Sunday, any Army vehicle that passed by would offer you a free lift up to Sonmarg. Any vehicle would also bring you back.

He went to the camp, but that night, his cousin Rashid arrived there by car, and told him that his father had been toppled. They rushed back to the house, only to find that the family had been evicted that very day. His brothers and sisters sat on some of their trunks near the fountain. His mother told him that they would not spend another day at their old house.

The result of Sheikh Abdullah's loss of power, his arrest and imprisonment was that his eldest son suddenly gained a political consciousness. On 9 August 1953, Farooq Abdullah's political education began.



In and Out of Jail

It was quite a shock to the family to learn that Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad could have turned against Sheikh Abdullah. He had been a staunch follower of Abdullah, and had once said that while there were only five *kalmas* in Islam, Sheikh Saheb was his sixth. He had even wanted his son, Bakshi Bashir Ahmed, to marry Farooq's elder sister Khalida.

For Farooq, it was the first experience of how turncoats develop in political life. To him it was unbelievable that Finance Minister Girdhari Lal Dogra or Sham Lal Saraf could switch sides so easily. He did not realise that emotional attachments played no role in politics, and this was an oversight that he would later regret during his own political career.

To cover up his shock, Farooq scoffed at the entire affair and told his friends that he would fight it out. He started a

campaign with two other friends: Shafi Khan and Mehrajuddin, the nephew of Khalida's husband, Ghulam Mohammad Shah. They took a car, and, in September 1953, went on a tour of Pulwama (then a part of the Anantnag district).

Travelling around, they met huge crowds, and Farooq had his first experience of public speaking. Perhaps because of his fascination with the way the great people whom he had met (such as Gandhi and Mountbatten) spoke, he found in himself a natural oratorical skill. He was only 16 years old, but he found he could get the people to respond to him.

Farooq went from Pulwama to Anantnag and found the crowds growing. The huge receptions may have unnerved Bakshi, for while Farooq was on his way to Sopore and Baramulla, he and his friends were arrested.

The Superintendent of Police — who had been hoping to become the father-in-law of one of Farooq's companions — came to arrest them with tears in his eyes, but had little choice, as his orders came directly from the Prime Minister of J&K. He impounded the car and brought the boys to Srinagar, where they were taken to the police lines and made to sit in a tent.

Farooq and his friends expected to be taken to the Central Jail, where most of the other arrested persons, including cousin Nazir, were being held. Instead, they were taken to the subjail at Kothi Bagh (which is now a police station). It was located directly opposite their college, where Farooq was a second-year student, and from where they could hear the noise made by the students.

Also in the jail was Maulvi Ahmadullah Hamadani, a religious leader from the Habbakadal-Fatehkadal area, who had sided with Sheikh Abdullah against Mirwaiz Maulvi Yusuf Shah. Of late, he had fallen out of favour, and it had been Sheikh Abdullah who had put him in jail, when Hamadani joined the pro-Pakistan cause of Ghulam Mohiuddin Karra.

Karra, a revolutionary leader during the Quit Kashmir movement, was a close relative of the future Chief Minister, Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq. Although he was the virtual number two in the NC, Sheikh Abdullah sought to cut him down by not accommodating him in his first cabinet, and instead making Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad his Deputy Prime Minister. Karra left the NC, and finding no political space for himself, despite his solid secular credentials (which he would later prove at Hazratbal in 1963), he started a party called the Political Conference, which became pro-Pakistan by 1953. Hamadani had joined this party, and was promptly jailed.

In the jail there were about seven rooms, and the three boys were put in the same room. Farooq winced on seeing the blankets and sheets and the bedbugs creeping up the walls of the filthy cell. The Indian-style toilet was in a room located across the yard, and if one had the urge, one was required to take a bucket of water and a *lota* (mug) along.

The warden was an old Kashmiri Pandit, and as soon as they entered the door to his office, he barked: "Take your shoes and things off, we have to search you."

Farooq lost his temper. "What do you mean", he asked, "we're not crooks." He refused to take anything off.

His friends tried to persuade him to comply, but Farooq was adamant. He resented the warden's aggressive attitude. The jailer softened. The boys were given a cook, who turned out to be a prisoner who was in jail for murder. They were also given some money to buy their vegetables, rice and oil.

Farooq, however, was an A-class prisoner, while his friends were B-class. This meant that he received a few rupees more than they did for food. They decided to pool their money and have common meals.

The other prisoner cooked for a few days, until the boys could take his awful cooking no more. So inedible was it that they decided to cook themselves, having learned some elementary skills in school. Of the three, Shafi cooked the best. It was Farooq's duty to clean the rice and wash the

vegetables but he never offered to cook. One day, the other two, unable to take it any more, turned on him, and asked him why he should be spared the task? Farooq protested that he did not know how to cook, but that if they insisted, he would do it. The results, however, were so hot and unedible that it was the last day he was entrusted with the delicate task. His friends told him to wash the dishes and do the cleaning and other assorted jobs but never asked him to cook again.

The boys noticed that Hamadani was getting special treatment. He always got cooked food from outside, and it included mouth-watering *gushtabas* and other delicacies; he had the largest room in the place and his door was never locked. The guards told the boys how Bakshi had thrown a party in Nishat Bagh, then in Shalimar Bagh, or in Emporium Garden, and that some of the food served there was reaching Hamadani.

The warden constantly advised the boys: "*Maafi-nama likh do*; write a letter to Bakshi, apologise for your behaviour, and get out of this jail. You are students, why are you wasting your time here?" Farooq and his friends refused to apologise to Bakshi, and that too, in writing. Instead, they threatened to raise hell unless their door was left unlocked at nights.

The warden was a person the boys just could not get along with. It was from him that they had to buy their foodstuff, and he always made a big show of measuring precisely the amount of vegetables and oil they purchased.

One day, while walking behind the cells, along the perimeter wall, the boys discovered that one of the windowpanes to the storeroom was broken, and that there was enough space between the bars on the window grills to put an arm through. So Shafi Khan put his hand in, and pulled out some heads of cauliflower. He used to wear a *safa* (a turban). He took it off, put the cauliflowers into it, and threw it over the perimeter wall. He was not interested in using the cauliflower for himself; he just wanted to harass the warden.

The jailer returned and found that some of his supplies were missing. The door was locked, however, and none of the guards had seen anything, since their attention was always directed to the front gate of the jail. Yet he knew somehow that Farooq and his friends were involved in this mischief, and he went to their cell, where he found them laughing.

"I know you boys have done this," he shouted, but that only made the youngsters laugh louder. "Why should we do it?" Farooq asked. "Is the lock broken?" The warden had to admit that it was not. He noticed, however, the broken windowpane, and accused the boys of taking the vegetables from the window.

Yet there were no vegetables in the boys' kitchen, so the warden was baffled. Who else would have taken it? he wondered aloud. Farooq suggested that they check whether Hamadani, perhaps, had not slipped his hand through the window and stolen the vegetables. The insolent remark incensed the jailer even further.

This incident caused a commotion in the jail for several days and made Shafi happy that the "bugger" had been taught a lesson. In any case, the warden began to treat them better, even going to the extent of justifying that he was not a bad sort, and was only duty-bound. Shafi, a chain smoker, started getting a supply of cigarettes.

The Chief Secretary, Medhat Kidwai, called for them one day. Farooq knew Kidwai very well, for he had served Sheikh Abdullah in the past.

"Beta, tumko padhna chahiye...tum taalim pehle puri karlo uske baad jo kuch karna hai karo" (son, you should study...finish your studies first; then you can do what you want) Kidwai said, imploring them to finish their studies instead of getting involved in jails.

"But we didn't do anything wrong, didn't break any law or say anything to anybody, and you had us locked up," Farooq replied.

"No, no, that was all for the security of the state," Kidwai clarified.

After the meeting, the boys were driven directly to their homes, and told that they were hereby released. After a month's stay in jail, the next day they were back in college. There had been no charges against them, so there were none to be dropped.

This jail experience was the only one Farooq would ever have, unlike his father. He had found it boring, and pointless, especially since he had been able to hear the rest of his world — with the college directly opposite the subjail — going on normally. This perhaps explain why Farooq's political programme, once he took over the NC, was so different in style and substance from his father's.

The three boys were received like heroes when they came out of jail. It was a big event. Bursting with pride, Farooq went to see his father who was lodged at the Hari Niwas in Udhampur, also known as the Udhampur Palace, where the family had, ironically, had gone for a holiday only a few months earlier.

He was astounded when Sheikh Abdullah shouted angrily: "This is not the time for you to indulge in political activities. It is the time for you to study." Farooq was not expecting a tongue-lashing, but when his father explained that it was not the right time for him to get involved in such things, no matter what people told him, he took it seriously.

A deep sadness engulfed him, however. Entering the walls of the palace, seeing the barbed fences, and seeing his father, who was no longer the Prime Minister but a prisoner, brought tears to his eyes. His father seeing him distraught asked him what the matter was.

They sat down. "Father," Farooq sobbed, "I'm crying about what is going to happen to us now that you're in prison. We have to study, we're not getting jobs, we're staying in Soura, our sister is married..."

Sheikh Abdullah was silent for a moment. "If I died, what would happen?" he asked.

"God would look after us," his son replied.

"The same God will take care of you," the father said. "Have faith in Him and you will come out of this. But first study, first make yourself worthy, complete your education. Then the sky is the limit for what you want to do."

Farooq took this advice seriously. He said goodbye to his father, and went on to complete his studies.

A Dose of Medicine

For someone who planned to study medicine, it is ironic that Farooq had to spend an extra year in the 12th class because he failed his chemistry examination. But, in 1955, he applied for medical college.

Sheikh Abdullah wanted very much that all his sons become doctors, because he himself had been unable to study medicine, due to the discriminatory policy of Maharaja Hari Singh, who would never select Muslims for medical education. So Sheikh Abdullah had had to settle for studying chemistry, and his greatest wish later became that all his sons should become physicians.

Tariq, however, refused, and instead opted for law. He was the rebel in the family, and he did not wish to be stereotyped. Mustafa, the quiet and docile one, went into medicine. Suraiya, the baby of the family and the object of everyone's affection, like Tariq, refused to go into medicine, and instead

chose teaching as a career, becoming a professor of English at the Women's College. She did, however, marry a doctor.

Back in 1955, when Farooq applied for medical college, there was no institution for learning medicine in J&K, so students from the state went to other parts of India, where about 40 seats were reserved for them in colleges around the country. It is important to note that, by nature, Kashmiris prefer to stay in their Valley rather than venturing to other parts of the country. One future acting Chief Justice, as will be seen, preferred to resign rather than be transferred to the high court of another state! Those, however, who do venture around the subcontinent, end up with a different perspective on Kashmir's relations with the rest of India. This phenomenon, unfortunately, has not been exploited by the people or the Government of India.

Farooq was called for the interview, and found himself standing face to face with the very man who had sent his father to jail — Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad. As the Prime Minister, he held the portfolio for higher education and thus headed the state's selection board (on which a handful of other ministers sat) which also sanctioned scholarships to send students all over India. Farooq felt he would never get a seat, but nonetheless he showed up at the Old Secretariat for his interview.

The Prime Minister asked him why he wanted to become a doctor. Farooq replied: "I want to serve my people; I feel doctors only make money, and they don't pay attention to the poor. I would like to help the poor."

Although the selection board was a political body, and although it was a time when corruption and nepotism were rising in J&K, it must be assumed that Farooq's answer, similar in substance to the statements made by hopefuls at beauty pageants, saw him through.

Candidates had to write the names of three places which they would prefer to be allocated. Farooq mentioned Indore as his first choice, because his uncle was there, and Delhi as

his second choice, because he had been there. He did not even put a third choice, because he did not know where else he would be comfortable. When the results of the selections were announced, Farooq found he would be attending the Sawai Man Singh (SMS) Medical College in Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan. At the time he did not even know where Jaipur was on the map of India. Nevertheless, he accepted the selection, informed his family, and made his way to medical school.

On the way to Jaipur Farooq stopped in Delhi, and went to see a woman who was to have a great influence on his life: Mridula Sarabhai. The scion of a powerful Gujarati family, a devout follower of Mahatma Gandhi, she was a General Secretary of the Congress party, very close to Nehru, and a great champion of Sheikh Abdullah's cause.

She did extensive work to help women during the partition. She helped Muslim women who were stuck in India by tracing them to the homes of Sikhs and Hindus, and facilitated their journey to Pakistan. Likewise, for the Sikh and Hindu girls who were stranded across the new border, she spared no efforts to see them repatriated. Hers was a tremendous humanitarian work that she undertook voluntarily and, being a wealthy family's daughter, she spent a good deal of her inheritance on it.

During those years after independence, when Nehru's preoccupations kept him distant from Sheikh Abdullah, Mridula served as a liaison between the two men. She had direct contact with Nehru. She wrote to him every day and delivered her letters to his personal servant Hari, who took them in directly to his master.

She knew that what had happened on 9 August 1953 was wrong, and she often told Nehru that, and warned him not to let all doors to Kashmir be closed. Thanks to her efforts, Kashmir remained emotionally attached to India during the dark days of Bakshi's regime. She remained the last hope of the triumph of truth and justice.

Unfortunately, many in Delhi took an uncharitable view of Mridula and her efforts. The Intelligence Bureau chief, B.N. Mullick, later wrote: "...her house in Delhi became a haven for the activities of the Plebiscite Front leaders, some of whom even made contacts with the Pakistan High Commission from this place. They took advantage of her munificence and made her part with a considerable amount of money...."

Even Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, did not appreciate Mridula's closeness to Sheikh Abdullah and the people of Kashmir, and when she became the Congress Party's General Secretary, she threw Mridula out. Even Mridula's family finally shunned her, and the only pillar of support she had was her brother Vikram, who became renowned as the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission.

Notwithstanding Delhi's suspicions during those turbulent years, Farooq and the family did come close to Mridula. She became a part of the family, and they, a part of hers. So much did Farooq admire her that he later named a ward after her at the Institute of Medical Sciences in Srinagar.

Throughout his schooling years Farooq would meet Nehru at Delhi and pay his respects. His meetings were organised at Mridula's behest, with whom he would often stay.

One day, Farooq went to see Nehru at his South Block office. Nehru had always been kind to Sheikh Abdullah's son, and always asked about his father. This time, Farooq dared to say that, in his perception, it was as if Nehru stood at one corner of the room, and Sheikh Saheb at the other, and instead of bridging the gap, there were people who were constantly trying to widen it. He felt that till the two leaders got together, and overcame those forces which tried to deceive them and keep them apart, the nation had a lot to lose.

This was a theme that Farooq had chosen to pursue from the very beginning of his political career. He always wanted to serve as a bridge between Delhi and Srinagar. For a long time, the Delhi mandarins would not allow him to, on his

terms, and when they did, it was only on theirs. This was in 1986 and it proved to be a disaster.

During the 1950s, however, Farooq did serve as a liaison, a bridge, between his father and Nehru, who had become a surrogate father for him. He saw a lot of India's Prime Minister during those years, and found him extremely kind.

Though Farooq was quite familiar with Delhi, and had also visited Indore and Agra, the rest of India was alien to him. Thus it was with apprehension that he climbed off his train at the Jaipur railway station in the early hours of the morning. The small size of Jaipur railway station itself, compared to Delhi's, was a shock. He got onto a rickshaw and made his way to the college, along the broad roads, past magnificent buildings, set in the desert. The buildings were pink, the people colourful, but the prevailing poverty was very obvious.

Farooq was introduced to the Rajasthan Governor, Gurmukh Nihal Singh, who had earlier been the Chief Minister of Delhi when it was first a state. He also carried letters of introduction to his father's friends, freedom fighters Hira Lal Shastri and Jai Narayan Vyas. Shastri was known as the father of the Rajasthan movement, and had started the Manasthali Vidyapeeth for women. Farooq was to call on these eminent persons in case of any difficulty.

Farooq had hardly settled in his hostel when initiation day rites were upon him, and he faced severe ragging. All manner of abuse was heaped upon him. Somebody asked him where he was from, and when he replied Kashmir, he was asked "*Kashmir se kyon aaye ho, maaderchhod?*" (Why have you come from Kashmir, you motherfucker?)

Among other things, he was made to take his clothes off and run around naked. The final nail in the coffin, however, was when some boys mentioned his father, and said that he was a traitor to India.

Coming from the Valley, where the idyllic surroundings and serene weather made people mild-mannered, Farooq was

aghast at the barbarism he was suddenly forced to endure. He had come from a protected environment at home, and had never faced abuse of this magnitude. Unable to deal with it, he ran away.

Farooq arrived in Delhi, went to Mridula's house and told her that he was returning to Kashmir because of what had happened at the medical college.

Mridula calmed him down and took him to see Nehru. The Prime Minister of India spoke to him soothingly. He told him about his own college days, and the ragging that he had been put through. He slowly raised Farooq's sagging morale, and told him that this was nothing to worry about, that it happened everywhere, and was a part of college life. The next morning, Farooq was put on a plane back to Jaipur.

On his return, the principal, Dr. R.N. Kastiwal, summoned him. Dr. Kastiwal had been in the Indian National Army, and had worked with Subhash Chandra Bose. He had attained the rank of colonel after serving in Burma, where he had suffered at the hands of the Japanese. He was a disciplinarian, but an extremely genial and paternal figure.

He asked Farooq why he had run away, instead of coming to him with his problems. He reassured Farooq that everything would be alright, and that this was something everybody had to go through. He mentioned that another Kashmiri, who was senior to Farooq, had gone through a worse time but was now perfectly adjusted. He added that it was quite possible that the very people who were teasing him today would become his greatest chums tomorrow. Finally, Farooq did settle down.

There was, however, one other occasion when Farooq felt like running away from the medical college. This was when he attended anatomy classes for the first time, and had to examine dead bodies. He had to look at and feel them, and when he was told to examine the bones, he felt that he could not cope with it. He decided to himself that he would do it for a month, and if he still felt queasy and upset, then he would leave it altogether. That option did not reappear.

In Jaipur, Farooq made many friends, some of whom he kept in touch with even after he became a Chief Minister. A few, like Suresh Dhingra and Jyoti Shankar, caught up with him in England, where they settled; others, like Dr. B.K.Goel, became famous physicians in Delhi. There were even students from abroad — like the Nepalese Dr. S.P. Uprethi, who worked as a domestic servant while doing his intermediate, but who, thanks to his industriousness, was selected by his country as a candidate for the medical college through the Ministry of External Affairs; or the Palestinian, Dr. Ahmed Hussain Kalla, now a rectal surgeon in America.

During the course of his studies, Farooq went on regular visits home, stopping by on the way to meet Nehru and then his father. Once, on his way home for the holidays, he stopped at Kud jail to meet Sheikh Abdullah. He arrived with his luggage, mostly golf balls, all packed up in a trunk. He had bought the balls in Delhi, because in Jaipur he could not play golf but during his holidays, he could indulge in his love for the sport at Srinagar and Gulmarg. Farooq's addiction for the game started while he was at Biscoe School. Both his maternal uncles were great golfers, and they lived on the golf course itself. Farooq started out by just watching them play, and gradually moved on to carrying their clubs, then taking a few swings at the tee. He started playing regularly when he was in the ninth or tenth grade, and soon entered competitions. Like most golfers, he gradually became besotted by the game, and it became a habit that added to his infamy while he was Chief Minister in the 1980s.

Thus, on one trip home, he had filled his steel trunk with golf balls, and when he reached Kud jail, he was stopped at the road between the gates for the outer perimeter wall and the inner one. The subjail comprised three private houses — Sheikh Abdullah was incarcerated in one; Kashyap Bandhu in the next; and the third one was apparently empty at the time.

At the gate, the guards told Farooq, who was to stay the night with his father, to open the trunk, and when he did, they pulled all his belongings out. The main guard pulled out the golf balls and asked: "Yeh kya bomb hai?" (Are these bombs?) Farooq explained that they were only golf balls, but he became agitated that he had even been asked such a question, and tears started rolling down his cheeks.

Sheikh Abdullah was waiting at the inner perimeter wall, wondering why his son was being held up. When Farooq finally entered, his father saw the tears on his face, and was told what had happened.

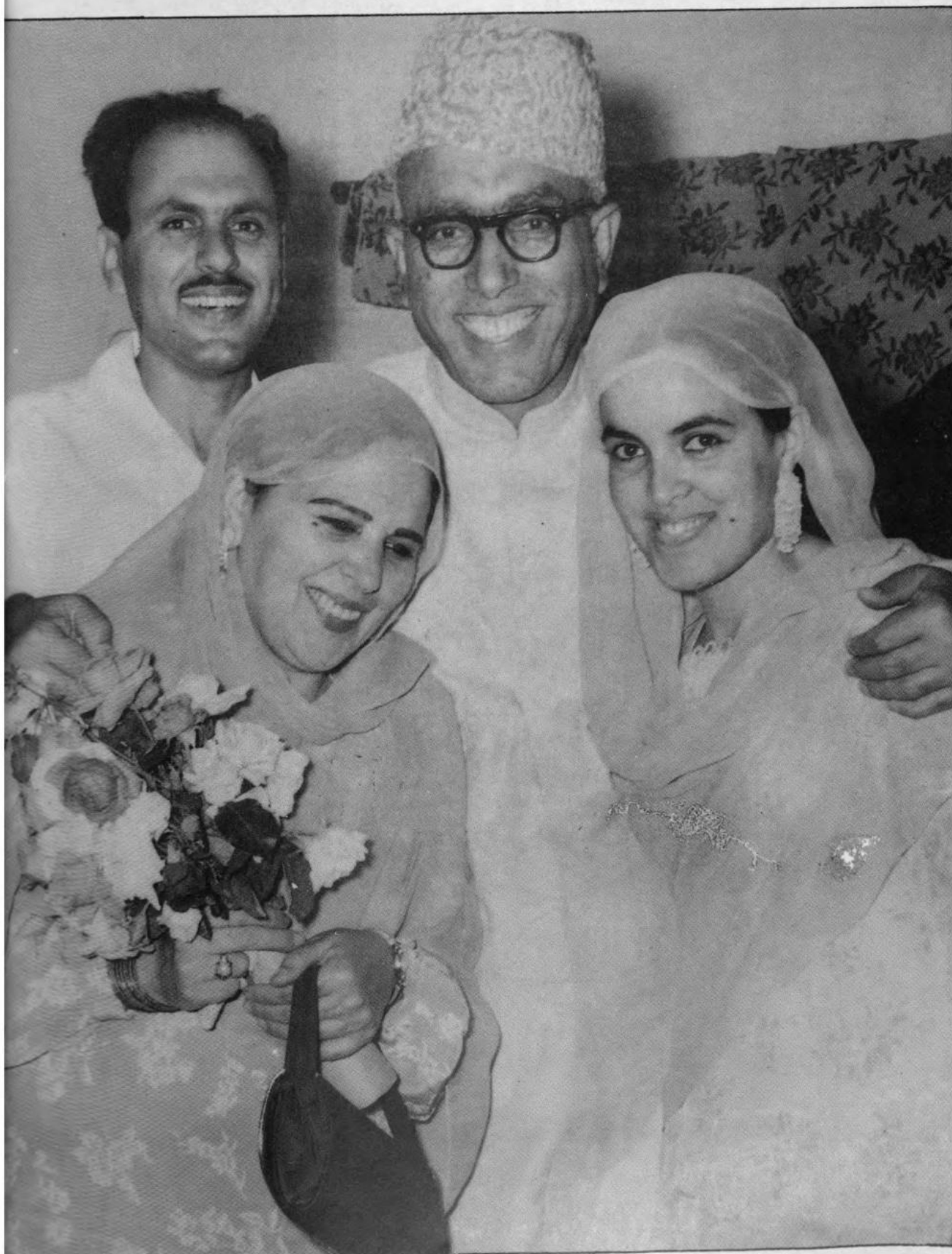
Sheikh Abdullah stormed out of the compound, past the gates and the guards. "Come on, shoot me," he said, opening the gates of the outer wall. He walked out. "Come on," he said. "What more will you do, I've had enough of this warden, you cannot keep me like this."

There was real panic. The security guards rushed to Sheikh Abdullah and apologised at his feet. They begged him to calm down. The superintendent of the subjail hid in his room. Sheikh Abdullah went back inside shouting. "Tell Pandit Nehru that if he wants to kill me, he is welcome to, but tell him not to humiliate me."

He told his son about the hens and chicks he had kept, and how the security detail would lure the chicks out of the barbed wire, gouge their eyes out, and then put them back into the compound, just to humble Sheikh Abdullah. "Is this a human way of treating people?" he asked his son. "They are teasing me because they have been told that I am the enemy of the nation."

Farooq was upset and he refused to stay the night, saying that he had to go and see Nehru rightaway. He packed up his luggage, went to Jammu, from there to Pathankot, and took the train to Delhi. He met Mridula, who immediately took him to see Nehru.

Upon hearing what Farooq had to say, Nehru became saddened. "*Sheikh Saheb ke saath yeh zulum kiya ja raha*



A family reunion after Sheikh Abdullah's release from Jammu Special Jail (in early 1964): Sheikh Abdullah with his wife, elder daughter Khalida and Farooq

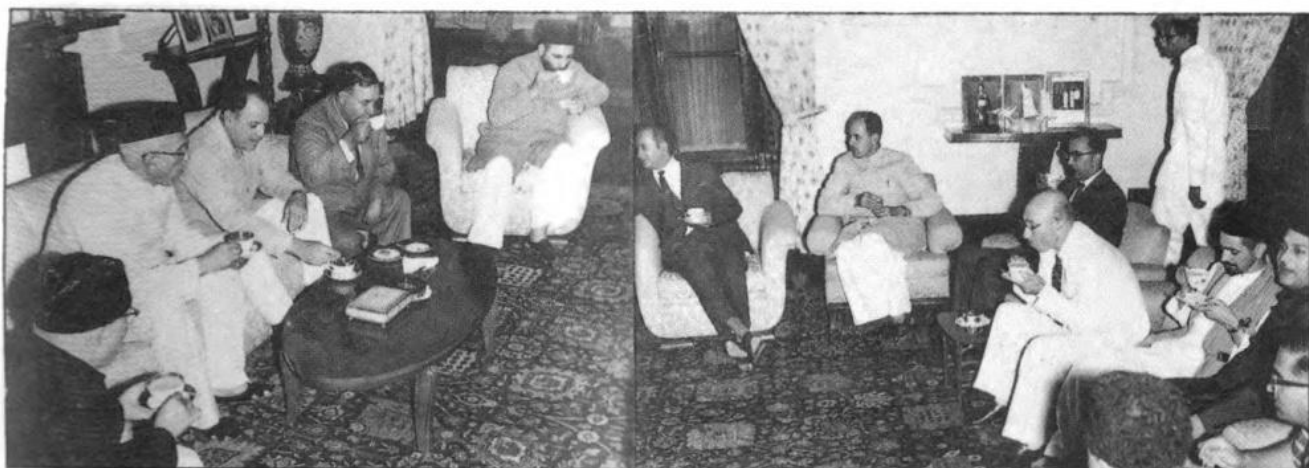
Original from



Indira Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Farooq, Sheikh Abdullah, Sucheta Kriplani and Mirza Afzal Beg (New Delhi, 1964)



Sheikh Abdullah receives a tumultuous reception after his release from prison in 1958. Farooq is seen stepping out of a car to him are Mirza Afzal Beg and Khawja Ali Shah



During a visit to Pakistan (1964): Sheikh Abdullah, Mirza Afzal Beg (sitting with President Ayub Khan); Farooq sitting next to Foreign Minister Z.A. Bhutto



Farooq (wearing a cap) at an official reception in Rawalpindi, Pakistan (1964)



Sheikh Abdullah and Farooq with Indira Gandhi, Dr. Karan Singh (fourth from left) and L.K. Jha (extreme left) (1976)



Sheikh Abdullah, Begum Abdullah, Farooq and Molly (standing) with their children and President N. Sanjiva Reddy (1979)

hai?" (Is this how badly Sheikh Saheb is being treated?), he asked. Farooq nodded. "*Beta khana khao, koi ghabrane ki baat nahin hai,*" (Son, eat your food; there is nothing to worry about), Nehru said, and then fell silent. Within a day, the entire garrison was shifted, and apologies were tendered. Sheikh Abdullah had taken up a cause, and so the imprisonment did not matter to him; it was the insults hurled at him that had really hurt. When Farooq next went to visit his father, he saw a sea-change in the situation.

This incident reinforced the impression in Farooq's mind that Nehru was a great man, and one who had the patience to listen, a person who always made him feel warm. Farooq was then, and would always remain, extremely fond of Nehru. He was one of the father-figures whom Farooq always sought out in his life. Perhaps Sheikh Abdullah's emotional distance, when he was around, or his physical absence, when he was in jail during the years when Farooq was growing up, engendered in Farooq a lifelong need to search out an older man for guidance, for companionship, or someone to whom he could turn when needed. Throughout his life, Farooq felt this need and during his college years, it was Nehru who filled that role.

It was Nehru's affection, and Farooq's experience at medical college, that gave him a sense of belonging to India. After this, he never felt anti-India.

Being an extrovert, Farooq took part in the debates held in college. Besides cementing his feelings towards India, it was also, probably, the place where his grooming, as far as making speeches were concerned, began. For, besides all the pre-debate preparation that he had to do, he also learned to formulate points while speaking.

The debates were also a good ground to impress girls, and this Farooq was keen on. It backfired only once: when he went to Maharani College. Just before the debate, one of the organisers told him that he had to argue against a topic, whereas he had prepared to argue for it. This happened

because his opponent had been unable to make it. Expectedly, Farooq's performance was unsatisfactory, and everyone watching him felt let down.

The medical college, however, being a coeducational institution, was a hotbed of romance. Farooq figured that being a tall and fair man, girls would be queuing up to date him! Soon, though, he became aware of the reality of things, as he discovered, that girls had a chemistry all their own. He found it hard to comprehend, for example, how an attractive girl from Malaysia fell head over heels in love with a friend of his, who was not impressive, nor tall, nor fair!

Farooq, meanwhile, fell in love with a classmate of his. It must have been a serious relationship, for they went so far as to even contemplate a wedding. Unfortunately, she belonged to a different community, which refused to accept their union.

While Farooq was in medical college, the erstwhile Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' (USSR) leaders, Nikita Khrushchev and Nikolai Bulganin, visited India. During this trip, they categorically declared the issue of Kashmir being one of the states of India had already been decided by the people of Kashmir.

The Soviet leaders passed through Jaipur, and Farooq wanted to see what they looked like. He and his friends waited for a long time on the roadside to get a glimpse of them. The two leaders addressed a huge gathering. Suddenly, Khrushchev suffered an attack of diarrhoea, so he had to rush to one of the toilets in the medical college hostel. He arrived there with his motorcade and his visit became the talk of the town for a long time afterwards.

It was a matter of great joy for Farooq when he heard that his father had been released in January 1958. No matter how disparate their personalities, they were still father and son. Now that Sheikh Abdullah was out of jail, and would be coming home, perhaps a new beginning could be made.

Farooq's brother, Mustafa, was also studying at the same medical college, so both the boys went up to Delhi, picked up Tariq, who was studying at Delhi University, and took a train to Jammu. There they came to know that their father was already on his way to Srinagar, so the brothers went to Pathankot and took an Indian Airlines plane to Srinagar. They were told that Sheikh Abdullah's procession was swelling as it moved northwards, and, because of the crowds and the traffic jams, he would be staying overnight in Kokernag. The boys decided to wait for him in Srinagar.

The next day Farooq and his brothers went up to Pampore, where Sheikh Abdullah's procession finally reached in the afternoon. The crowd was massive. The brothers joined the cavalcade, and listened as their father turned on his charisma and addressed the public.

The happiness, however, did not last long, for Sheikh Abdullah was rearrested in May. His liberation was doomed from the very moment he had stepped out of Kud jail. An interview that Sheikh Abdullah gave to *Blitz* was the ammunition that the forces opposed to him needed. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, amongst others, used it to convince Delhi that Sheikh Abdullah was not a changed man, that he would never be, and that his line of thinking was, as always, anti-Indian. In fact, all that Sheikh Abdullah had done was to project the Kashmir problem in a blunt and straightforward manner. He maintained that Kashmir's future was not settled as there had not yet been a plebiscite. The throngs that greeted him unsettled influential sections in New Delhi, and, again, Sheikh Abdullah's days of freedom were numbered.

Farooq, meanwhile, returned to medical college, and only came back for the summer holidays. He found his father, who was the Chairman of the Muslim Auqaf Trust (which he had set up to manage the mosques and shrines in the Valley), busy constructing a small mosque near his house. He would remain busy all day overseeing the construction, and when Farooq returned from Jaipur, he accompanied his father to the

mosque, where, for the first time, father and son began to communicate.

Initially, Sheikh Abdullah told his son about the history of the tragedies that the Kashmiri Muslims had suffered under the various regimes, including the Pathans, the Mughals, the Sikhs, and the Dogras. He gave instances of the agonies that the common man had undergone. He spoke of how Islam came to the Valley, and what the plight of the people had been at that point of time.

On a more personal level, they talked about the mosque that was being built, and then, about Farooq's studies. For the first time, the son felt that his father wanted to talk to him, to make him understand what his crusade in life was all about. After all those years of silence, he felt that his father was finally opening up.

It was only days after Farooq had come home, and was rediscovering a relationship in which he was beginning to feel closer to his father, when Sheikh Abdullah was rearrested.

It was in the early hours of the morning that the house was surrounded by the police who came with a warrant for his arrest. They wanted to take him away as quickly as possible, before the people woke up, for they feared it might otherwise become impossible. Sheikh Abdullah calmly said, "alright, if that is how it must be, let me have a cup of tea, offer my prayers, and we'll go."

He then bid goodbye to his family and got into the police vehicle. Farooq was inconsolable that this arrest should have taken place at this time.

But the worst part was still to come. The authorities searched their house, looking for papers that connected Sheikh Abdullah with the conspiracy case that he was charged with. The case had begun in October 1957 against M.A. Beg, Begum Abdullah (for receiving Pakistani funds) and nine others for conspiring to overthrow the government through violent means. By the time Sheikh Abdullah was

arrested in May 1958, the ambit of the conspiracy case had been widened to accuse 25 other people. Six years later, the Government of India had to withdraw the case. It became another sore point that the Valley harboured against Delhi.

District subjudge Merajuddin supervised the search. He aggressively searched the house and, with a cigarette dangling from his mouth, went through all of Sheikh Abdullah's books and papers. He opened up Sheikh Abdullah's Quran, and Farooq was amazed at the lack of respect this man, who was himself a Muslim, showed to the holy book. "Even a Hindu would not do this," Farooq told the subjudge. "You have not washed your hands...don't you think you should clean yourself before touching God's book?" He added that even the Hindu soldiers who were on duty would be more respectful whilst handling the holy book. The subjudge, however, apparently could not care less.

Farooq visited his father at the Jammu subjail where the conspiracy case was heard. Although the meetings, which lasted an hour or two, were very pleasant, with the father inquiring about his sons' health, their studies, it was not the same as the brief interregnum Farooq and he enjoyed just before his rearrest.

The Holy Relic and Unholy Politics

After Sheikh Abdullah's incarceration, India broke all its promises of retaining J&K's special status, the political guarantee of the preservation of the cultural identity of the Kashmiri Muslims. The Indian Constitution's Article 356 was made applicable to the state, wherein President's rule could be imposed in the case of a breakdown of the functioning of the constitutional machinery. The jurisdictions of the Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) of India and the Election Commission of India were extended to J&K. Even the nomenclatures of the head of government and the head of state were changed from Prime Minister to Chief Minister and Sadar-e-Riyasat to Governor. Centre-state relations took a plunge.

With the imprisonment of Sheikh Abdullah, and with Delhi reneging on its promises, India rapidly lost the moral high ground it had attained after the tribal invasion in 1947. With the loss of the autonomy Kashmiri Muslims had enjoyed till 1953, a political movement resurfaced in 1955, under the name of the Plebiscite Front, started by M.A. Beg after his release from prison. This front revived the accession issue, and because it effectively mobilised opinion against Bakshi, Sheikh Abdullah's followers joined it. The mass upsurge against India was channelled through it, and it became a forum for pro-Pakistani political activists as well, despite the repressive measures resorted to by Bakshi's government.

Some of Bakshi's repression was carried out by his "peace brigade", each member of which was paid 29 rupees and 15 annas per month. They were basically goons, employed to protect Bakshi's regime, and to act as his watchdogs in the *mohallas*. Anyone who even uttered a word against his regime was picked up by these goons and beaten up before being sent to jail.

One such incident took place when Praja Socialist Party (PSP) leader, Asoka Mehta, visited the Valley. In November 1954, he went to Srinagar to inaugurate a branch of his party, which Maulana Mohammad Syed Masoodi was interested in joining. Mehta was walking through Lal Chowk with a lady acquaintance when he was accosted by some of these goons and roundly abused; even the lady, who was wearing a sari, was not spared. Farooq happened to be buying books nearby, and, upon hearing the commotion, ran out into the crowd, and told the goons that this was not Kashmiri culture, not the way self-respecting Kashmiris behaved.

The goons forgot about Mehta and turned on Farooq, who had to run back into the bookshop to take refuge. The assault on Mehta was publicised; yet, Nehru, to prop up Bakshi, who was seen as pro-India, condemned the PSP for "joining hands with the enemies of the country".

Eventually, Farooq completed his studies, although he was no brilliant student. In fact, it took him an extremely long time to complete his medical education: he joined in 1955, and was still in his final year when China invaded India in October 1962.

It may well have been a blessing in disguise, for the war and the mobilisation within the country cemented the bonds that Farooq had established with India. Everyone was shocked by the Chinese aggression and became ready to fight. Farooq and the other final year students felt that if the war continued, they would all go to the front lines to give medical assistance. Many of them who were senior enough readied themselves for a commission in the Army, were the need to arise.

Fortunately, the war was a short, though humiliating, affair, and Farooq finally became a doctor. He returned to Srinagar, where he took on the job of senior house officer (a resident doctor) at the SMHS Hospital, attached to the professor of medicine. Life settled into an uneventful routine: Farooq would get on his scooter, go to the hospital, attend to patients, and return home.

On 27 December 1963, while Farooq was working at the hospital, he heard a commotion outside. People were out on the roads, and somebody told him that the holy relic of Hazratbal had disappeared, that it was feared stolen.

Situated on the shores of the Dal Lake, the Hazratbal shrine houses a holy relic, the *Moi-e-Muqqadas*, a strand of hair of the holy Prophet. Following some minor adventures, it had reached Srinagar after being purchased by a rich Kashmiri merchant, Khwaja Nooruddin Ishbari. Kept in a quartz container, the relic is displayed to devotees on important religious festivals. Along with becoming an important element in the religious life of the Valley, it also emerged as the political symbol of Kashmiri Muslim identity.

The importance of the shrine was recognised by Sheikh Abdullah during his struggle against the Dogras, when his Auqaf Trust took control of it in 1943. It became a platform for the Kashmiri Muslim leadership to further its political objectives, particularly after Abdullah's dismissal in 1953. Sheikh Abdullah added to its political significance by making fiery speeches there, during his short-lived release in 1958.

Ironically, it was the Dogra government which first tried, in 1931, to use the Friday gathering at Hazratbal for political purposes, when some Muslim officers tried to keep people from attending the public speeches made by Sheikh Abdullah at the Jama Masjid in Srinagar. Sheikh Abdullah, however, made a dramatic appearance on the scene, and exposed the plans of the government against Kashmir's Muslims.

Another important aspect of the shrine was the fact that it represented Kashmir's secular view of religion, culture and civilisation. Sheikh Abdullah had given the Kashmiri Muslim identity this direction as a consequence of his outmanoeuvring the Mirwaiz of Kashmir for the leadership of the Kashmiri Muslims. Lastly, through Hazratbal, Sheikh Abdullah's NC played up the psychological genocide with which Kashmiri Muslims were threatened in the face of the Centre's attempts at undermining the special status of J&K.

As a consequence, the disappearance of the holy relic resulted in a major upheaval in the Valley. Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs were all on the roads; people poured in from the villages. The administration was completely paralysed.

Farooq was still in the hospital ward when some staff members and other people came up to him. "What are you going to do this medicine for?" they demanded. "Today our existence is at stake."

Farooq could not believe what he was hearing. He thought that it was just another of the many rumours that Srinagar was famous for. But as he came out of the hospital and walked down the road, the commotion seemed to be growing. People told him that the relic had been stolen; others

said that there was definitely a conspiracy against Kashmiri Muslims.

Some of the NC people told Farooq that since his father was in jail, the onus was on him to give some direction to the people of the Valley at this moment of crisis. But Farooq was not ready for such a responsibility and he committed what he later considered was one of the biggest blunders of his life.

A Restoration of the Holy Relic Action Committee had been formed, and Farooq felt that he needed the help of more experienced people at the helm of the committee, to give the movement proper direction. While the committee comprised stalwarts such as Maulana Masoodi and Mohiuddin Karra, Farooq did not want to hand over the platform to them lest they emerge leaders in their own right, and so he put forward the name of the young Mirwaiz of Kashmir, Moulvi Farooq, whom Bakshi had installed as recently as May 1962.

The NC people were taken aback that, instead of himself taking on leadership of the committee, Farooq had decided to give the stage to Mirwaiz Moulvi Farooq. They reminded him of the traditional *sher-bakhra* rivalry that his father had with Moulvi Farooq's uncle, Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah, who had fled to Pakistan in 1947. (Sheikh Abdullah's followers were called the "*sher*"s, after the Sher-e-Kashmir, while the Mirwaiz's followers were "*bakhra*"s because of their goatee beards.) Although Sheikh Abdullah had won that battle for the leadership of the Kashmiri Muslims, the rivalry continued.

The NC stalwarts understood this and thus feared giving the Mirwaiz an effective platform. Maulana Masoodi, for instance, argued that the "*bakhra*"s had never thought of the people, but only of themselves; that when Sheikh Abdullah was fighting the Maharaja, Moulvi Yusuf Shah had joined hands with the Maharaja to fight Sheikh Abdullah. Furthermore, they felt offended that Farooq had taken such a step without consulting them. Farooq, however, overruled

them and insisted that since he was the Mirwaiz, Moulvi Farooq should head the Action Committee.

Most of the leaders expressed their reservations only after the agitation was over. And Farooq explained that he had taken the decision on the spur of the moment, as the agitation had devolved too fast for him to stop and reflect at that point.

Since there was a total paralysis of government, the committee, in effect, administered the Valley during the days that the relic remained missing. People brought all sorts of things, including food and money, for supporting the agitation, and it strengthened the base of the committee. Every day meetings were organised by it, and Farooq, too, got an opportunity to sharpen his oratorical skills.

It was only later on that Farooq realised the enormity of his mistake. For Moulvi Farooq kept the Action Committee going even after the mysterious reappearance of the holy relic. Its financial base and name were used to give him and his followers a new political platform for years to come. In fact, only a few months later, it evolved into the Awami Action Committee, whose influence was to grow tremendously during the 1980s.

The holy relic crisis also gave birth to a militant organisation which, at that time, resided on the fringe of Kashmiri politics. As the years went by, however, it was to remain a tiny, yet persistent, nucleus of pro-Pakistan support in the Valley. The Students and Youth League was formed by students of the local university as well as the engineering college. Among its founding members were A.R. Kabli and Bashir Kitchlu. In 1968, its members protested against a convention organised by Sheikh Abdullah (they felt he was trying to build bridges with Delhi and was preparing to abandon the demand for plebiscite), and one of them was arrested. He was Shabir Ahmed Shah, who would become an important figure in the movement during the 1980s. The militant politics of the Students and Youth League did not

catch on in a big way, but it did become a parent organisation to the militant organisations of the 1980s, in the future.

During the agitation, Farooq went to Delhi and met Nehru as a representative of the Action Committee. It was a useful meeting, for the Prime Minister of India assured him that things would be sorted out. Lal Bahadur Shastri, at the time a minister without portfolio, was sent to Srinagar, and after the relic was recovered, played an important role in allowing clerics to attest to its genuineness, at a time when the situation was tense. Till this day, however, the circumstances behind its disappearance and recovery are shrouded in mystery.

For many in the NC, the recovery was the end of the matter, and a time for heaving a sigh of relief. However, people like Moulvi Farooq, who had discovered a new platform, a new lease of political life, and who perhaps wanted the agitation to go on, continued to harp on the need to find the culprit. While Farooq was curious to find out who the thief was, it was felt that Moulvi Farooq merely wanted to cling to the Action Committee, lest he be returned to the confinement of the old mosque where his ancestors had preached their sermons.

The Hazratbal incident was an eye-opener for Nehru. He realised that Delhi's Kashmir policy had gone extremely wrong, and the first thing he sought to do to rectify the situation was to order the withdrawal of the conspiracy case, and release Sheikh Abdullah.

Although Nehru was a democrat, he had become a prisoner of the office that he held. He had been led astray by Bakshi, G.M. Sadiq, and D.P. Dhar. More than the individuals, however, it was the Kashmiri Pandit community, which had always resented the fact that Sheikh Abdullah had snatched away their power and privileges, that continued to poison his views. Once, when Nehru visited Kashmir, and met Bakshi and his ministers at the guest house, he asked them: "What about Sheikh Saheb? You can't keep him in jail all the time."

As all too often, however, whenever Sheikh Abdullah was mentioned, Bakshi would change the topic. This time too, he replied: "Sir, do you see the Dal Lake? How beautiful it is."

One of the great mysteries has been the lack of rancour that Sheikh Abdullah expressed towards Nehru despite all those years of incarceration. It is proof, perhaps, that the Sheikh never really blamed his friend for his plight. Sheikh Abdullah later told his son that when he met Nehru in 1964, Nehru told him of the pain he had suffered all those years, knowing that he had locked up his friend, and that it had not been right.

A Trip to Pakistan

When Sheikh Abdullah was released in 1964, his family went to Jammu to receive him. Only Tariq could not do so as he was in London, preparing for his bar-at-law. Begum Abdullah, Farooq, and Khalida watched the breath-taking reception Sheikh Abdullah was given, and accompanied him to Doda and eventually to Srinagar.

Nehru had called Sheikh Abdullah to Delhi for discussions, so he left soon after, taking Farooq along with him, who took leave from the Government Hospital to accompany his father. They went to Teen Murti House, where Sheikh Abdullah started discussing his views on settling the Kashmir problem with various leaders. He visited various mosques in Delhi, going to a different one each week, and spent time in lengthy conversations with Nehru (under the tree where the eternal flame now burns), mulling over all that he had discussed with other leaders. So busy and preoccupied

was he that he hardly rested, prompting Nehru to tell him one evening at the dinner table that the security officers were falling ill because of the long hours the Kashmiri leader was keeping, starting in the morning at four, and ending only in the wee hours of the next day.

Farooq sat in on some of the discussions. One day he asked his father why every morning began on the same note, with Sheikh Abdullah telling people the same story of Kashmir, yet every day ended the same way, with some people agreeing and others disagreeing. "What's the use of all this?" Farooq asked.

Sheikh Abdullah told his son that one should not get disheartened, even if the other side did not always agree with one's views. He said that his job was to try and convince them, and that he must continue, irrespective of other people's likes and dislikes.

Unfortunately, Farooq did not learn that patience is not just a virtue, but a powerful weapon for a leader looking to extract political concessions, that sticking to one's stands and ideals was more important than throwing up one's hands and giving up. His impatience would later lead him to commit arguably the biggest blunder of his career: joining hands with the Congress party.

During their stay in Delhi, Sheikh Abdullah received a message from Pakistan's President, Field Marshal Ayub Khan. He noted that the Kashmiri leader was discussing the Kashmir issue with Nehru and the Government of India, and wanted Sheikh Abdullah to visit Pakistan and talk to Ayub and his government too.

There was an uproar in Delhi. Nehru, however, was an extremely strong political leader, and was able to persuade his party that it would not do India any harm if Sheikh Abdullah went to Pakistan. In fact, coming after the Chinese invasion and the new alliance between Peking (later Beijing) and Rawalpindi, Nehru felt that Sheikh Abdullah's visit might

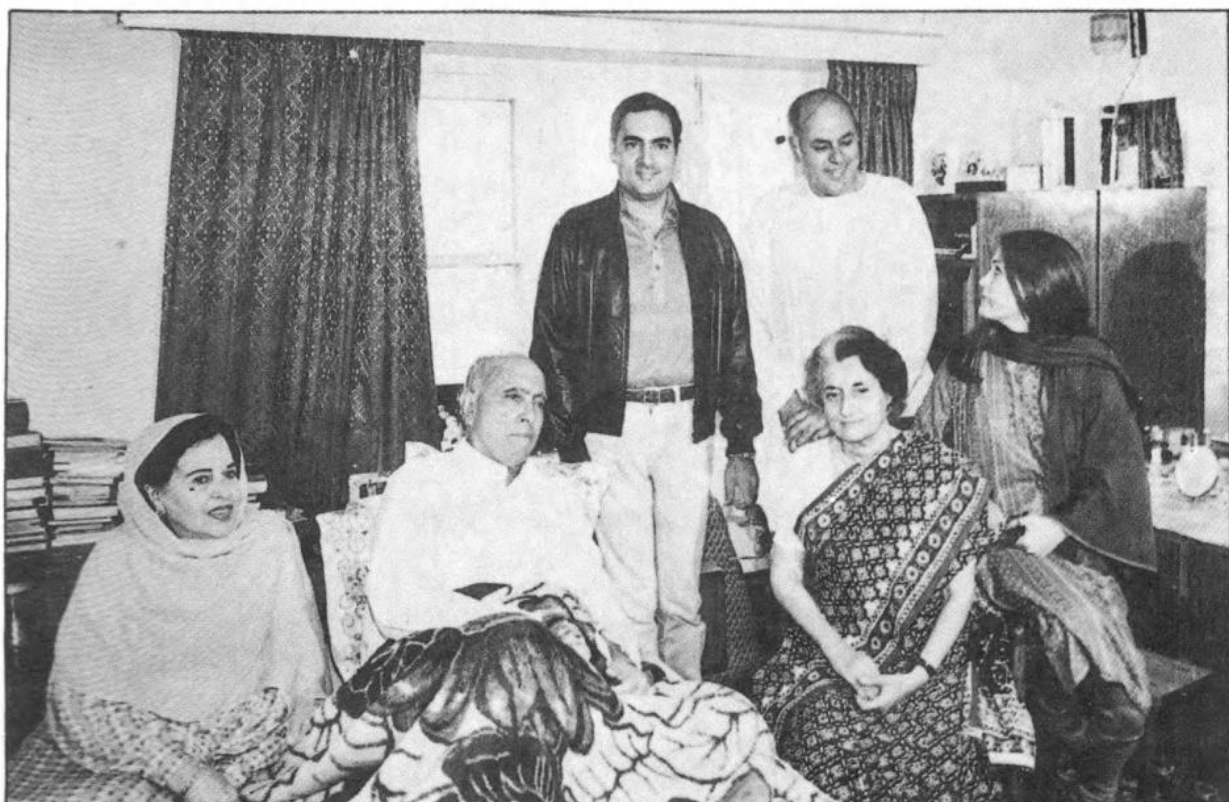
even facilitate a breakthrough in the larger ambit of Indo-Pak relations.

A delegation comprising Sheikh Abdullah, M.A.Beg, Moulvi Mohammad Syed Masoodi (who was still an MP), Khwaja Mubarak Shah (of Baramulla), Khwaja Mubarak Shah Naqshbandi (an expert on constitutional law), comrade Mohammad Shafi Beghseri (who was from Mirpur of "Azad Kashmir" originally), and Farooq and his cousin Rashid, hopped into a Pakistan International Airlines plane, and went to Pakistan.

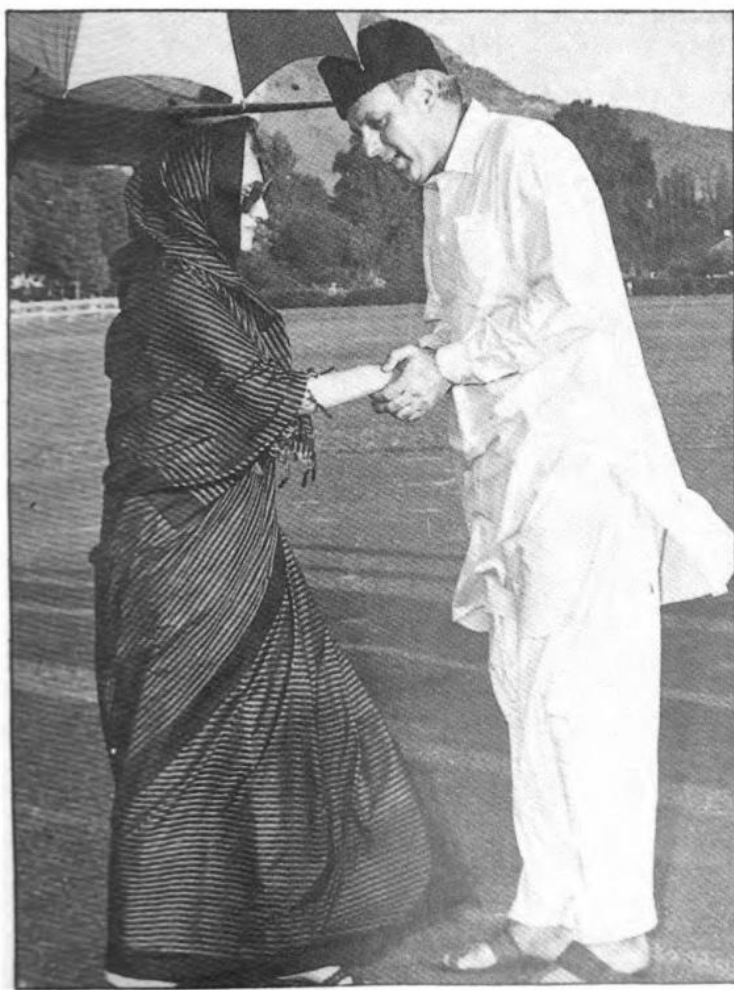
They overflew Lahore, which Farooq was seeing, although from a bird's eye vantage, for the first time since his childhood. The plane landed at Chaklala airport in Rawalpindi. Among the people waiting to receive Sheikh Abdullah were his two political rivals from the 1940s, namely, Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah and Chaudhury Ghulam Abbas; the famous poet Hafiz Jullundari; and Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, on behalf of the government. Yusuf Shah went up the gangway and as soon as the door to the aircraft opened, he embraced Sheikh Abdullah. While a huge crowd of Pakistanis looked on, the two Kashmiris shed tears before finally disentangling themselves.

The roads were lined with cheering crowds, and although Sheikh Abdullah was made to sit in a closed car for the 13- km trip to the Presidential guest house, at one point, when the motorcade stopped, he got out of the car, and sat in one of the open-topped escort jeeps so that he could wave to the crowd.

Among the people whom they met were Pir Maqbool Gilani, the descendant of Syed Abdul Qadir Gilani, also known as Dastgir Saheb and Shahi Baghdad, for whom there is a shrine called Khanyar in Srinagar. The actual grave of the Sufi saint is in Baghdad, but he was part of the group of mystic Persians who had spread the message of Islam in Kashmir more than 500 years ago. It was the persecution by Bakshi



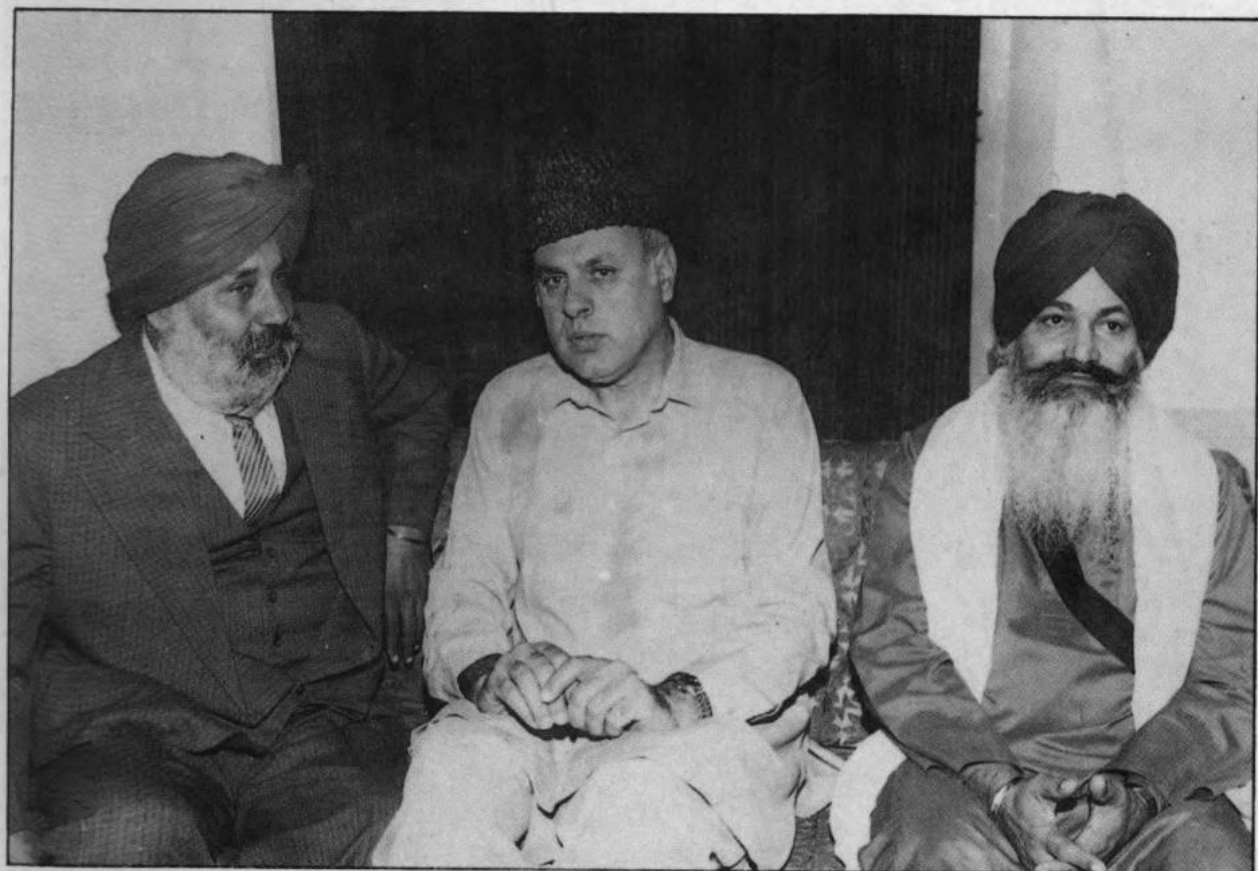
Farooq and Sonia Gandhi share a secret: Begum Abdullah, Sheikh Abdullah, Rajiv Gandhi and Indira Gandhi also present (1982)



Newly appointed Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah welcoming Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (September 1982)



Sheikh Abdullah's cabinet after the induction of Farooq as Health Minister in 1982



Farooq hobnobbing with H.S. Longowal and P.S. Badal (October 1982)



Ramakrishna Hegde, Jyoti Basu, Farooq and others at an Opposition conclave (Calcutta 1983)



Opposition leaders' conclave in Srinagar (October 1983)

and his goons that had driven Pir Gilani out of Kashmir and into Pakistan.

Sheikh Abdullah had closed-door talks with Ayub; M.A. Beg and Bhutto accompanied the two men. Farooq noticed great excitement when his father returned, and he was told that Ayub had accepted an invitation to meet Nehru in Delhi. It had been a proposal that the Kashmiri Pandits had said would never work. Yet Ayub had agreed to come to Delhi some time in June, depending on Nehru's convenience.

Ayub later claimed that Sheikh Abdullah had proposed a confederation of India, Pakistan and Kashmir; Sheikh Abdullah clarified that it was only one of the points touched upon. In any case, the Pakistanis were against the idea, for it would open their own can of worms in East Pakistan, whose people were bound to demand a status equal to that of Kashmir.

While these discussions were going on, Farooq played a few rounds of golf with the Pakistan Army chief, General Mohammad Musa, and some of his officers at the Rawalpindi Golf Club. As far as Farooq was concerned, he was here to work on his golf. He did not know about the military situation, and he did not want to know about a proposed confederation. "I didn't want to talk to General Musa about anything other than golf," Farooq later recalled.

Sheikh Abdullah told his son that he would be going to Muzaffarabad for a tour of "Azad Kashmir" on 27 May. He was to complete a three-week tour to Lahore, Karachi, Dacca (now Dhaka) and then Rawalpindi, after which Ayub wanted him to go to Charsadda in the NWFP (North-West Frontier Province) to meet Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the "Frontier Gandhi" (also known as "Badshah Khan") who had opposed the creation of Pakistan and demanded a separate "Pakhtunistan". Badshah Khan's son, Wali Khan, had already visited Rawalpindi to meet Sheikh Abdullah with the invitation; Farooq was told to pay a return visit to Badshah Khan with the acceptance of the invitation and decide on a likely date for Sheikh Abdullah's visit.

Farooq flew from Rawalpindi to Peshawar, from where he was escorted to Charsadda. At Badshah Khan's Gandhian cottage, Farooq was fed, and his host expressed happiness over Sheikh Abdullah's impending visit. Farooq was impressed by Badshah Khan. He looked like a strong man, a man of character, of firmness, who would not bend or bow to anybody. He was tall, broad-shouldered, long-nosed, and totally rugged. Despite being in his 60s, despite all the prisons he had been in and all the illnesses he had contracted there, he was straight-backed, erect, solid. And stunningly clear-thinking.

Badshah Khan asked Farooq what Sheikh Abdullah was doing, and thinking. Farooq indicated that his father was seeking a permanent solution between India and Pakistan to the Kashmir problem. Badshah Khan reserved his comments. Farooq again reassured him that the meeting between him and his father would take place, although it was deliberately scheduled as the last item on Sheikh Abdullah's itinerary because of Ayub's domestic problems — Ayub did not want the Kashmiri leader and the Pakhtun leader to create a sensitive situation at the very start of the former's visit.

Since he still had time before catching his plane to Muzaffarabad, where he would catch up with his father, Farooq went for a spot of sightseeing to the Darya Khyber, the "gate" where the Khyber pass begins, and to a huge nearby dam that had been constructed recently.

Farooq also expressed a desire to visit Phil Edmonds, the former principal of Biscoe School in Srinagar. Charges had been brought against him, during Bakshi's time, that he was a foreign agent, and in possession of a wireless set. It was obviously more of a campaign of calumny, launched against him because he had been a tough person who did not allow students into his school on any basis other than merit. He belonged to a church, whose diocese was in Amritsar, and so, following the controversy, he was shifted to Peshawar,

where he became the principal of the Sir Edwards Memorial College.

Edmonds was delighted to see his old student, and the two had tea together. He asked Farooq about the school and the boys from Farooq's time. Edmonds had aged and he talked nostalgically about the old days, admitting that he did not enjoy running a college as much as a school, because he found boys in their teens already were set in their ways and, hence, less influenceable.

Yet, Edmonds told Farooq, he had developed a good rapport with the Pathans, as he was very much an outdoors person himself. In a place where many preferred to talk with their firearms, he was still able to control and discipline his boys. Everybody in the area seemed to have high praise for Edmonds.

From there, Farooq was taken to see the Darya Khyber, the beginning of the Khyber pass, and then he went to see the dam. The chief engineer of the dam project was also a Kashmiri named Ashahi; his father had been one of the original members of the 1931 movement against the autocratic Dogra rule and, later on, when Sheikh Abdullah took over government, he had become registrar of the J&K University. Unfortunately, the partition of the subcontinent had affected his family: his sons had gone to what would later become Pakistan for their education, and stayed back when the division took place. One of them had constructed the dam.

Farooq was looking down at the drop of the dam, holding onto the railing, when Ashahi greeted him and told him he had some very bad news to give him.

Farooq's heart sank. The thought flashed across his mind that perhaps his father had been killed in "Azad Kashmir", shot by a tribesman. But the news had nothing to do with his father. Jawaharlal Nehru had died in Delhi, the engineer informed him.

The shock of this unexpected tragedy was so severe that Farooq almost lost his balance and fell into the dam. As the personal jolt subsided, the impact this development would have on the wider canvas of the Kashmir problem began to dawn on him. He realised that the only leader who had had the guts and the popularity to solve the Kashmir tangle was now gone. Some of the thoughts that flashed across his mind were: What would happen now, would things go back to the turmoil of the past, to the animosities existing between India and Pakistan? Realising the impact of the news on Farooq, Ashahi made him sit down, breathe deeply and regain his balance. Farooq then flew back to Rawalpindi. Sheikh Abdullah had returned too and had contacted caretaker Prime Minister Gulzari Lal Nanda, and had spoken to the possible future Prime Minister Morarji Desai, who confirmed the news and informed him of the funeral arrangements. Sheikh Abdullah broke down and wept.

Before they returned to Delhi, Sheikh Abdullah and Farooq went to see Ayub. Farooq was not keen on going back immediately, and asked the Pakistani President whether he and Rashid could stay back and complete the tour that had been organised for his father. Nobody had any objection, and Farooq continued his journey of the country.

Rawalpindi had appeared to be an overgrown village. It was unkempt, filthy and full of dilapidated buildings. Islamabad was then just being built, and it looked more promising: wide roads, an impressive assembly building, the backdrop of mountains; it had the look of a modern town, while, in contrast, Rawalpindi appeared to be collapsing.

Farooq went to Lahore and stayed at the old family hotel, Nedou's, which was now run by some Pakistanis. It was a Punjabi city with a modern crowd, a modern dress-sense and, a modern outlook. Everything was imported, however, in stark contrast to India which was indigenising everything. He went to Karachi and visited the Indian High Commission situated on the very posh Elphinstone Road. In Karachi,

Farooq was invited to address some meetings organised by Kashmiris who had settled there — there were Kashmiris who were tour operators, and others who had done very well in the emporia and handicraft business. These families had apparently been there before partition and had done so well that they had stayed on.

Farooq then visited East Pakistan. Dacca was an eye-opener for him. From the air, his first impression of this part of Pakistan had been that it was beautiful and covered with green. On the ground, however, it was a different story. At the university, for instance, the ill-concealed hatred of the intellectuals for West Pakistan was startling. He went to a school, and drew a map of India and Pakistan on the blackboard, and asked the children to point out where Kashmir was. They could not. Farooq met a number of Bengali intellectuals, and he also visited a jute factory. He visited the Indian Consul-General in Dacca, who also happened to be a Bengali, and who briefed Farooq on the situation in East Pakistan. He even met a handful of boys from "Azad Kashmir" who were studying at Dacca's medical school, and even they complained about the east wing's neglect.

Later, he went to have dinner with Governor Chaudhury Fazal Elahi (who later became the President of Pakistan when Bhutto was the Prime Minister) before his return to West Pakistan. Farooq, in a very frank interaction, told the Governor that the people felt they were slaves of the west wing, as they had no say in the running of the country's affairs.

Elahi asked him whom he had met, but Farooq did not mention any specific names, fearing repercussions from the authorities. The Governor dismissed it as Indian propaganda.

Farooq returned to Rawalpindi and bade farewell to Ayub, thanking him profusely for giving him the privilege of seeing Pakistan. He conveyed to Ayub his impressions of the east wing, and repeated what he had told Governor Elahi. Ayub listened carefully, but made no comments.

From Pakistan to “Azad Kashmir”

Despite his keenness to arrive at a political accommodation for a final sorting out of the Kashmir situation, the new Indian Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, did not have the political strength to overcome the desire of senior cabinet and party colleagues to expedite a constitutional integration of Kashmir with India. Foreseeing that, for the time being, progress seemed stalled in Delhi, and estimating that it would be some time before negotiations were built up again, Farooq decided to go on with his own life: he wanted to go to England and settle down as a doctor. He informed Sheikh Abdullah, who was supportive, seeing that the present political situation was fluid and the future uncertain.

Father went to see son off at the Bombay port, where Farooq boarded a vessel of the Lloyd Castino shipping firm and reached London in the beginning of September 1964. There, Farooq went straight to the quaint Indian YMCA at

Fitzroy Square, which is even today the first place that Indians, who know nobody else in England, head for. He applied for jobs to various hospitals, and was finally accepted at one in Norfolk, on the east coast of England.

No sooner had Farooq settled down than his father came to visit him, in February 1965. As there were a considerable number of people from the undivided J&K, particularly from Mirpur in "Azad Kashmir", Sheikh Abdullah was invited to address numerous receptions and meetings. Throughout industrial Britain — Bradford, Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester, and even London — Kashmiri immigrants thronged to meet the man who had dominated the politics of the Valley in the 1930s and 1940s; they all wanted to know what the latest situation in J&K was, and whether there was any chance of a reunification the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK) with the Indian side.

Sheikh Abdullah, on his way back, stopped in Algeria and also in Saudi Arabia, to perform Haj. His visit to Algeria, however, became the start of a controversy that landed him back in jail. While meeting President Ahmad Ben Bella, Sheikh Abdullah was offered a chance to meet the Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai. They met, and their discussions were later duly reported to the Indian Ambassador in Algiers. In the wake of the recent humiliating defeat of India at the hands of China, and the fact that Sheikh Abdullah, in any case, attracted suspicion because of his persistence with the cause of the Kashmiri Muslims, this incident did not go down well with New Delhi. Parliament witnessed uproarious scenes, with the members demanding an immediate impounding of Sheikh Abdullah's passport.

In Saudi Arabia, his passport was seized by the Indian Ambassador. The Saudi Government of King Faisal offered Sheikh Abdullah a Saudi passport in case he wished to stay on, but the Kashmiri leader was not one to run away from his responsibilities. As soon as he landed at Palam airport in

Delhi, he was arrested and taken to Ooty in Tamil Nadu, where another chapter of his confinement began.

Farooq, in the meantime, was happily dating a bevy of women, mostly nurses from his hospital. He enjoyed the good life, and Indian doctors who were in England at the time recall that Sheikh Abdullah's son was known for being fun-loving and not having much patience for politics back home. He was said to be a mediocre physician, with no professional ambitions, and quite content with his nine-to-five job.

At the hospital, he met a trainee nurse named Molly Pritcher. He was immediately smitten by her, for she was the first girl he met who did not drink or smoke. In fact, she initially refused to even date Farooq! He became more determined in his efforts to woo her and even started thinking of marrying her, for he saw her as a woman, who, as his wife, would help him settle down in England, and satisfactorily raise his children. Eventually, "with the help of God and friends", she agreed to start dating him.

Molly came from a working class family of Suffolk; her father worked in "a transport company" (Farooq makes the astounding claim that he does not know what his father-in-law did for a living); her brother had joined the Royal Air Force, while her sister taught at a school. Lacking a cosmopolitan outlook, the family went into a panic when they heard that a Muslim wanted to marry their girl. Farooq had to meet the parents and convince them that he did not intend taking four wives, or that just his repeating "*talaq, talaq, talaq*" would not leave their daughter a divorcee.

Once her parents were mollified, he then had to tackle his own family. It was a tricky situation because, before he had left for England, Farooq had been engaged to a cousin. This had been done just before the Hazratbal crisis broke out, while Sheikh Abdullah was still in prison. In a simple ring-exchanging ceremony, Farooq had been engaged to the seventh daughter of his father's second brother, Sheikh Ghulam Mohiuddin.

Farooq telephoned his father, who had been released from jail earlier that year, in January 1968. Sheikh Abdullah was furious. He told his son that since it was his choice, he would have to inform his uncle and break the engagement. "You will have to apologise to them," he said to Farooq. "I'm not going to, it is you who must."

Farooq, however, was not brave enough to face the consequences of his actions, and avoided calling his uncle's family. But word finally got back to them, and they wrote him a letter asking for clarifications. Eventually, the girl's brother telephoned Farooq, who mumbled some kind of explanation.

Farooq's actions caused Sheikh Mohiuddin's family great hurt, and created a lot of bad blood between the two families.

Molly and Farooq were married in England on 14 September, 1968, and they came to India in 1969. A *nikaah* ceremony, conducted by Sheikh Abdullah, took place in Srinagar and, after the ceremony, Farooq and his bride went back to England.

The creation of Bangladesh, and India's victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war, brought about a fundamental change in the Kashmir movement. Though the main platform, the Plebiscite Front, was not technically pro-Pakistan, politically and emotionally it was so, and Sheikh Abdullah did not hesitate to play the "Pakistan card" in order to achieve his goal of finding a political safeguard for the Kashmiri Muslim identity. Naturally, Pakistan backed the movement, although it had been disappointed with the lack of support it received in the 1965 war, when it had assumed that Kashmiris would rise up against India and help ensure Pakistan's military victory. Ayub's and Bhutto's miscalculations proved that Sheikh Abdullah was indeed a very astute political player.

Till 1971, the Plebiscite Front leadership of M.A. Beg and Sheikh Abdullah was firmly of the belief that self-determination was the only solution to the Kashmir problem;

it was their only expressed goal, their only objective. For sustenance they drew on Pakistani support and, as a result, despite the suggestions of a number of friends and colleagues, they took a contradictory stand on East Pakistan: they refused to support Mujibur Rehman's demand for self-determination! This move underlined the fact that their movement was more political than ideological.

Sheikh Abdullah was human, and if he had visited Dacca (now Dhaka) with Farooq, or if his son had been in Kashmir, then perhaps he would not have failed to foresee the success of the Bangladesh movement. After the war, he realised that Pakistan would never have the capability to grab Kashmir by military means, so it could not even be an effective counterweight for pro-Azaadi (freedom) elements. So he started rethinking his strategy, and the result was a three-year-long dialogue between Sheikh Abdullah and M.A. Beg on one side, and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and civil servant G. Parthasarathy, on the other.

It was during the negotiations in 1974 that Farooq was invited by Amanullah Khan, the head of the United Kingdom branch of the Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), for the organisation's convention in "Azad Kashmir" that year.

It was quite natural for them to have been in touch. Farooq's father, though technically not a member, was, for all practical purposes, the leader of the Plebiscite Front, which his colleague M.A. Beg founded in the 1950s to press forth the demand for the plebiscite that Nehru had promised Kashmir. As expected, an office of the Plebiscite Front came up in "Azad Kashmir"; and in 1965, it adopted a constitution and elected Abdul Khaliq Ansari, a native of Mirpur, as its President and Amanullah Khan, a native of Baltistan, as its General Secretary.

In 1965, however, some members of the Plebiscite Front, including Amanullah Khan and Mohammad Maqbool Butt (who would later be caught, tried and hanged in India), formed the J&K National Liberation Front (JKNLF), and now

demanding complete independence for all of J&K, including "Azad Kashmir", and Gilgit and Baltistan, which were known as the northern areas of Pakistan. JKLF started a branch in England, where a lot of affluent expatriate Kashmiris had settled, and Amanullah Khan was deputed to head the organisation. Khan, upon reaching England, however, dropped the "National" from the name of the organisation, and it became the JKLF.

Through the Plebiscite Front, the JKLF had gotten to know Sheikh Abdullah and his son, particularly after the former's visit to England in 1965. They kept in touch with Farooq after that, but the relationship was anything but political. They knew that Farooq was too busy with his own life, his medical career, and his social activities, to bother with political activities. Often, though, Farooq received telephone calls from front members, inquiring about the health of his father.

It was the negotiations between Sheikh Abdullah and Indira Gandhi which prompted the JKLF to invite Farooq to "Azad Kashmir" to see what life was like on their side of the line of control (LOC). They wanted Farooq to hear them out, to gauge their sentiments, and to convey what he saw to Sheikh Abdullah, before the Kashmiri leader finalised anything. To Farooq, it seemed that the people of "Azad Kashmir" were apprehensive that an agreement between Sheikh Abdullah and Indira Gandhi may leave them high and dry with Pakistan.

Since he had not visited "Azad Kashmir" during his 1964 trip, Farooq decided to go there. He took a two-week holiday from his hospital, and went via Pakistan to visit "Azad Kashmir". He landed in Rawalpindi on 25 May 1974, and the first question he was asked at the airport stunned him: What did he think the test of the atomic bomb by India signified for the people of Pakistan and of J&K?

It turned out that the previous day, India had successfully tested a nuclear device at Pokhran in the Rajasthan desert. Farooq had had no idea about this because when the

explosion took place, his plane had already left England on its way to Pakistan! He brushed off the questions, saying that he had no knowledge of any such thing (which was ironically true), and that he hoped India and Pakistan could still find a way out of their turmoil.

The next day Farooq went to Muzaffarabad and, from there, he toured the rest of "Azad Kashmir", including Bagh and Mirpur. He was accompanied by Ansari, Amanullah Khan and Maqbool Butt. Travelling around, he noticed the roads, the educational institutions, the water supply, and all the other amenities that people had been provided.

At a college that he visited, he met a teacher who was basically an English professor, but was teaching physics. When Farooq inquired about this, the professor explained that the college did not have another person to teach physics. So what he was doing was that before each class he would read the chapter he had to teach, put the salient features on the blackboard and when the class assembled, he would, like a parrot, recite all those things he had just read. When problems had to be solved, the professor would simply ask the students to take them home, work on them, and show him their results the next day. This method saved him from the embarrassing discovery of his ignorance of the subject he was supposed to be teaching.

Farooq and the JKLF leaders went to Mirpur, where a massive convention of the JKLF took place. Fiery speeches were made against both India and Pakistan, for their occupation of J&K. The locals, it appeared, did not want to be a part of either country; they wanted a free nation.

At that time Farooq had spent a decade living in England and travelling extensively through Europe. After his marriage to Molly, he had become a British citizen. He had had little to do with either India or Pakistan for quite a long time, and he did not envision a future for himself in the subcontinent. Yet, having seen a different, far more developed world, and

having noticed where his own people stood in comparison, Farooq began to have second thoughts.

Caught up with the spirit of the convention at Mirpur, Farooq began to envision Hari Singh's Kashmir as free Kashmir, with a relationship with both India and Pakistan. He thought it would not be a bad idea if the two countries accepted the situation, for he did feel strongly that, finally, they would have no other option.

When his turn to speak came, Farooq relayed to his audience all that he had recently seen: how backward and neglected "Azad Kashmir" was, how they had no good schools, no hospitals, no agricultural colleges, no engineering colleges. The entire region had been ignored as if it did not exist.

A militant named Azam Inquilabi, of Operation Balakote, would later claim (in 1989), that at this convention, "our former senior colleague", Farooq Abdullah, had taken a vow to be "morally committed to working for establishing an independent Kashmir". Inquilabi would also speculate that Farooq "must be feeling very uneasy for having broken the promise which he had made before a large gathering and in the presence of stalwarts like the late Maqbool Butt and Amanullah Khan".

Before leaving Mirpur, Farooq visited a few houses, and it then hit him how much money was being repatriated by Kashmiris in England; almost all the fittings in each house were from Britain. The people had no love for Pakistan, for most of those who had gone to England had had to do so after being displaced by the Mangla Dam. Ironically, almost none of the benefits of the dam had reached the people of Mirpur.

The people were not happy, and even among themselves they were divided — they still followed a caste and subcaste system, and everyone was trying to pull the other down, not wanting him to progress. "Azad Kashmir" was in bad shape.

Before leaving, Farooq said goodbye to Amanullah Khan, who told him how terribly bitter he was about Pakistan separating his homeland, Baltistan, from "Azad Kashmir" and incorporating it as part of the northern areas. Farooq noticed that the bitterness had not dissipated with time, as was obvious even when the two men met in Belgium for a meeting of the European Commission in 1993. Farooq is quite clear that Amanullah is pro-*Azaadi*, not pro-Pakistan, because he still fights for the independence of his region from Pakistan. If Amanullah ever made a pro-Pakistan statement, then according to Farooq, it was out of expediency.

Back in Rawalpindi, Farooq called on the "Azad Kashmir" President, Sardar Abdul Qayoom Khan, a Poonchi Muslim who had led the revolt against Hari Singh, prior to the tribal invasion in 1947. He and Farooq would frequently bump into each other after this meeting, whether it be in London, or during Haj (or even in Belgium during the aforementioned conference). Qayoom Khan would later become Prime Minister and oversee the armed movement of 1989 from his side of the line of control.

Farooq went to see the President of Pakistan, his old friend Chaudhury Fazal Elahi. The first thing Elahi asked him, however, was why he had visited Ayub's house. The day Farooq had landed in Pakistan, he had wanted to visit and offer condolences to the family of Field Marshal Ayub Khan, who had just passed away. Farooq felt especially indebted to the former President for having arranged his tour of Pakistan a decade earlier. But when he went to Ayub's house in Islamabad, he was told that Ayub's entire family had gone away for the 14th day ceremony to Ayub's burial place in his native village. Farooq could not proceed there, so he left a message of condolence for Ayub's son and family.

When Elahi queried him on this, Farooq stood his ground and explained why he had gone there. The President soberly told Farooq that such a gesture would not go down well with

Bhutto. Needless to say, Farooq came out of that meeting with a bad taste in his mouth.

His last meeting was with Pakistan's Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Farooq's friends had cautioned him to be wary when he went to meet Bhutto. They warned him that he would try to dominate the conversation, and Farooq, too, to the extent of making him feel uncomfortable. But Farooq had lived in England long enough not to be daunted by such threats.

Farooq went to see Bhutto's secretary, Yusuf Buch, a native of Srinagar who had been with Bhutto ever since his United Nations days. Before Farooq was shown in to see the Prime Minister, he sat and chatted, in Kashmiri, with Buch, who told him that everything had been finalised in Simla (now Shimla).

The statement took Farooq by surprise. Buch explained that in Simla, Bhutto Saheb had accepted India's demand to turn the line of control into the international border. "What they're holding is theirs, and what we are holding is ours," Buch told Farooq in Kashmiri.

"Really?" an incredulous Farooq asked.

"Yes," Buch said. "This has been done, there is nothing more left to be done."

As soon as Farooq stepped in and greeted Bhutto, the Pakistani Prime Minister ushered him outside. He did not want to speak to his visitor in the sitting room, but preferred to talk to him under a tree in the garden. Farooq could only speculate that Bhutto was apprehensive of eavesdroppers.

"What has your father told Mrs. Gandhi?" Bhutto demanded rightaway.

"What do you mean, Sir?"

Bhutto had no patience for games. "There is a discussion going on as far as Kashmir is concerned," he said. "Has he finally decided to settle with India?"

Farooq said that he did not know. He pointed out that he had been in England all these years and although he did not know exactly what his father had in mind, he was sure that

he would not do anything that would not be in keeping with the wishes of the people.

Bhutto became agitated. The pitch of his voice sharpened, and he appeared irritated. So Farooq, ever mischievous, decided to further provoke him, and said, "I've been in Pakistan two weeks, and I've heard you have already settled with Mrs Gandhi."

"How have you heard?"

"It's already become the talk of the town here," Farooq said, adding that people were talking of how the line of control was going to become the international border, and that each country would keep what was already on its side of the border. "There is nothing new about it any more", Farooq added.

"No, I don't fix deals," Bhutto hissed.

Farooq would not budge. "Sir, if you want to know, go into the streets and hear what the people are saying," he said.

Suddenly, Bhutto's temperature seemed to drop. He became calm and collected. In a conspiratorial tone, he told Farooq: "Do you know that the President of 'Azad Kashmir' had come, and he had told me that I should not allow you to visit? I told him I would look into the matter, but if I did not want you to come, I would have seen to it that you did not land here."

Bhutto relaxed further. "But I wanted you to come, to see what our part of Kashmir is like." He looked sharply at Farooq.

"Your father is always saying that the Rawalpindi road should open. What does he mean by that?"

Farooq said that he had travelled around "Azad Kashmir", and he remarked that many people in his part of Kashmir felt that the grass was greener on Pakistan's side. But conditions were pitiable on this side. Farooq related the story of the Mirpur English professor who was being forced to teach physics. "If I were in your position," Farooq said, "I would not open the road. Because if you open the road, people from that side will come and see that your region is not worth it."

Bhutto seemed happy to hear an honest opinion, and their conversation went on to other topics. Farooq noted the tremendous difference in Bhutto from when he had last seen him a decade back, when he had been a mere Foreign Minister of a tiger called Ayub Khan. This time Bhutto held the top job. In 1964, Bhutto had not seemed particularly impressive, and although his battles in the United Nations were legendary, he seemed nothing more than a thin, tall, balding fellow, who, worst of all, had a shaky voice. But as ruler of Pakistan, he looked far more radiant, full of self-esteem, totally sure of himself.

Before Farooq left, Bhutto told him that talks between India and Pakistan had broken down after the atomic explosion. He asked Farooq, who was going to Delhi, to carry a message for Indira: that Pakistan was willing to resume talks in August or September. "Give her my love," he added.

Farooq returned to England in June 1974. In the meantime, his father invited some of the "Azad Kashmir" leaders from Britain to visit Kashmir. As most of them were British passport holders, Indira Gandhi allowed them to visit; Farooq also decided to take the opportunity and visit India. In July, Farooq and some of the delegates went to Srinagar, where they were given a tumultuous reception. A boat procession was taken down the Jhelum river and after that, Sheikh Abdullah and his guests went to the NC headquarters at Mujahid Manzil and addressed a huge gathering.

On his way back to England, Farooq stopped to meet Indira and brief her on his trip to "Azad Kashmir". He met her in the Prime Minister's South Block office, and when he sat down, P.N. Dhar, her secretary, sat down beside him with a pencil and paper to jot down whatever was to transpire. Farooq felt uncomfortable about this, for it was the first time he had spoken with a Prime Minister in the presence of a secretary, waiting to put to paper every word that was uttered. He realised that Indira was an extremely shrewd politician. As far as she was concerned, nothing should be amiss, nothing left to chance.

After briefing Indira on his trip to Pakistan, Farooq gave her Bhutto's message. A change swept over her and she became visibly excited. When Farooq told her that the talks between the two countries would be resumed in August or September, Indira was thrilled. "Are you sure?" she asked as Dhar was scribbling furiously.

When Farooq added that Bhutto had sent his love to her, Indira beamed broadly. She rose from her chair in excitement, and could not contain her ever-broadening smile.

Farooq was amused by the reaction of the then Prime Minister of India. What was not so amusing, however, was the fact that Bhutto evaded giving a written commitment to her at Simla in 1972, instead only giving her a verbal promise on settling the Kashmir dispute between the two countries without ever intending to keep that promise, and Indira Gandhi threw *realpolitik* to the winds simply because Bhutto's famous charm had melted her.

Farooq next came to India in October. He found the people hopeful about an accord being reached, and many told him that he should think about returning to India to help his father out. It was during this trip to India that Farooq would make up his mind.

The first person Farooq met was D.P. Dhar, who was now in charge of the Planning Commission. Although Dhar had been responsible for his father's dismissal and incarceration in 1953, he was extremely gentle and kind to Farooq; he became, in fact, yet another father-figure for Farooq.

Meeting Dhar, Farooq remembered an incident Sheikh Abdullah had recounted to him: During the days he was fighting Hari Singh, a student, belonging to a large landowner's family, came up to him. There used to be a saying in Kashmir in those days: "Dhar *abaad*, Kashmir *barbaad*; Dhar *barbaad*, Kashmir *abaad*" (if the Dhars prosper, then Kashmir suffers, and if the Dhars suffer, then Kashmir

prosper). So it was a surprise to Sheikh Abdullah when this youngster approached him and introduced himself as belonging to a landowning Dhar family.

The youngster took out five rupees and gave it for the NC. The NC leader realised the youngster had progressive leftist leanings, and that he probably disagreed with his father on the philosophy of the tiller owning the land. From that day onwards, Sheikh Abdullah took D.P. Dhar under his wing and nurtured him.

Farooq admired Dhar. First of all, he felt that Dhar was the most handsome person in the Government of India. Tall, broad, and an intelligent Kashmiri Pandit to boot, he was well read and fluent in several languages. Dhar had gone to Pakistan after the 1971 war to discuss things at the official level, and when Farooq visited three years later, all he had heard was praise for Dhar. All he had done in Rawalpindi, journalists told Farooq, was buy books; he purchased a trunkload of them, mostly in Urdu, by, and on, famous writers such as Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Mohammad Iqbal, to name a few. The journalists also asked Farooq if all Kashmiris were as bright as D.P. Dhar. Whenever the Pakistani press had asked him something, Dhar had replied by quoting couplets of Iqbal or Faiz. They had been taken aback at the depth of his knowledge, and felt that if all Kashmiris were as intelligent as Dhar, then Pakistan was headed for trouble.

When Farooq arrived in Delhi, he telephoned D.P. Dhar, and said he would like to call on the old man. Dhar, however, told him not to come, and that he would call on Farooq instead. Farooq would not hear of it: Dhar was an important functionary, and he was just an ordinary citizen. He insisted on visiting Dhar in his office or residence. Dhar refused. He said he was going to an embassy function, and on the way would drop by at Kashmir House, where Farooq was staying.

D.P. Dhar arrived, elegantly dressed as always. They embraced, and tears rolled down Dhar's cheeks. Farooq felt troubled to see his hero so emotionally upset. Dhar started

talking about his previous posting, when he was the Ambassador to the USSR, and how he had suffered a heart attack there. He looked Farooq in the eye, and told him to tell Sheikh Abdullah how Indira was gunning for him. Since he was in charge of the Planning Commission, he was to be made a scapegoat for all the failures of planning. He added that he feared she would send him away as Ambassador to Moscow again, which would be tantamount to cutting his throat: after his heart attack, the Russian cold would kill him. "I will not survive in Russia," he said to Farooq, "please request Sheikh Saheb to tell Mrs. Gandhi to send me to a Mediterranean country instead, like Yugoslavia, where the weather would be better for my health."

Farooq conveyed the message, and Sheikh Abdullah did talk to Indira about it. But the Prime Minister was a woman who could not be dissuaded from a decision once taken. Since he was responsible for the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty, he was presumed to have wide and deep contacts, and it was thus felt that he was the right man for Moscow. He was sent there, and soon after, in 1975, he suffered a massive fatal heart attack.

Life was also coming to a close for another one of Farooq's "ideal human beings": Mridula Sarabhai. She was gravely ill. She had malignant cancer, and one could see her flame of life flickering.

Farooq went to see her at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi. She was in a critical state. She breathed heavily and with great difficulty. She could not speak without great strain and one had to put one's ear close to her mouth to hear what she was saying. But she managed to tell Farooq: "Be good to Molly." She caught her breath and added: "Don't let her face the same tragedies your mother has had to." Then another silence, and her last words to Farooq: "Don't trust Delhi."

Some of her words were to later haunt him. A few weeks Gandhi later, after Farooq had returned to England, Mridula passed away.

Farooq went on to Kashmir, and during his visit, Indira also paid a visit to the state. She was going on to Ladakh, a place Farooq had never been to, so he requested her to take him along in her aircraft. She agreed, and soon Farooq was flying over a landscape quite unlike that of either the Valley or Jammu. He saw Zojila and Lamayuru for the first time; mountains of different colours — brown, black and blue. He noticed the lack of vegetation except where the Indus flowed. He saw craters, which looked like those on the moon. He found the people simple and affectionate, and their culture quite dissimilar to his own, i.e., the Kashmiri Muslims.

Farooq's interest in the state was stirred. He had already become intrigued by his people, the Kashmiri Muslims, following his trip to "Azad Kashmir". When he returned to Srinagar from his trip with Indira Gandhi, it seemed to various people that Farooq could perhaps now help his father play a major role in Kashmir, for it was apparent that Sheikh Abdullah would soon be taking the reins of the state back in his hands.

Farooq's old teachers from Biscoe School were the first ones to plant the idea in his head. They and others then said that considering Sheikh Abdullah's age and health, he needed someone around him, someone who would be his listening post. Farooq was told that someone was needed who could listen to the grievances of the people, who could tell his father when things were going wrong; someone who would not be a sycophant, the kind that builds an impenetrable wall around the leader, and allows only the good things through, shielding from him the bad.

Farooq's immediate reaction was that he, for one, could not do it. Over time, however, he decided that as difficult as it sounded, he would have to try. He would have to tell Molly to wind things up in England, even though he knew it would not be easy and would require time. Farooq realised that he would have to wait for the right opportunity to break the news to his wife and that it was time for their family to return to India.

As usual, however, Farooq was unable to work up the courage to tell Molly, and one day a letter arrived for her, from a common friend, mentioning that Farooq was talking about going back to Srinagar. She showed him the letter, and was naturally less than happy that he had not shared his thoughts on the subject with her even though he had already been back five weeks.

The cat was out of the bag, and Farooq could do little more than mumble "Yes darling". Molly was completely uncomfortable with the idea, for she was a totally apolitical person and happy to be the simple housewife that she was. She knew that going to Kashmir would mean a totally different life.

Later on, in fact, during the uprising of 1990, she would force Farooq to pack up and escort her out of the Valley, out of India, and back to England. At the time, however, they went through the usual husband-wife spat, and in the end, Farooq started making preparations to go back to Kashmir. He gave notice at the hospital.

An announcement was made in Delhi that Sheikh Abdullah would be taking over the reins of government in Kashmir in February 1975. An accord had been signed in November 1974 between M.A. Beg and G. Parthasarathy. It accepted the state of J&K as a part of the Union of India, which was to be governed by Article 370 of the Constitution of India, and have residuary powers of legislation. The Government of India agreed to "sympathetically consider amendment or repeal of some category of central laws extended to the state after 1953 as the state legislature decides".

For many Kashmiri Muslims, the accord was basically just a discussion on the modalities of transfer of power from Syed Mir Qasim and the Congress party to Sheikh Abdullah and the Plebiscite Front, which would shortly be renamed National Conference. The expected backlash followed.

Within the Plebiscite Front, there was a split, with the extremist section led by Sofi Mohammad Akbar forming a

militant political organisation, the Mahaaz-e-Azaadi, in 1976. They did not want integration with India; to them, it was not for nothing that hundreds of families had suffered from 1953 to 1975. Though they agreed with Sheikh Abdullah that the strategic situation had changed in the subcontinent, they were aggrieved that he did not insist on a return to Kashmir's pre-1953 status. They felt he should have sought surety against further encroachments through institutional safeguards.

There was also great disappointment amongst a section of the youth, to whom it was clear that Delhi was not allowing them the autonomy of 1953. Further galling was the fact that Sheikh Abdullah was elected leader of the State Assembly by the Congress legislature party, the party that had been solely responsible for the erosion of Kashmir's special status. In short, they felt that the man who had been fighting for the protection of their identity had now sold out to the very forces which were trying to wipe it out.

It is important to note that the youth of the time had been born after 1947. Hence, they had had no experience of the tribal entry into the Valley in October 1947; they were unaware of the danger that Pakistan had posed to the Kashmiri Muslim identity at that time; they saw no reason to be grateful to India, which according to their experience, had only worked towards dissipating their identity by integrating them into its society. Their revolt begun.

The negotiations leading up to the accord had already alerted many, and in October 1974, another militant organisation, the People's League, was formed under the leadership of Fazl Qureshi. It received the support of a group called Al Fatah, which had taken over the earlier Students' and Youth League, and had the support of the Islamic Students' Organisation. Youngsters who joined the People's League included Farooq Rehmani, Shabir Shah, Azam Inquilabi and Shakeel Bakshi. They were amongst those youngsters who were picked up and arrested in the nights preceding Sheikh Abdullah's return to power.

Rediscovery of India

On their way to Srinagar to assume power, Sheikh Abdullah and Farooq (who had come from England for a fortnight), stopped in Jammu to meet a man named Devi Das Thakur. He was a judge in the state high court, and he was to be given leave, on the order of the President of India, to enable him to join the new government. The interesting thing was that Sheikh Abdullah knew nothing about Thakur, other than the fact that he was a judge; it was M.A. Beg who had proposed his name.

The grant of leave was a special occasion, enacted traditionally. Sitting at the head of the courtroom were the justices of the high court, with state Chief Justice Murtaza Fazal Ali, who would later ascend to the Supreme Court of India, sitting in the middle. Justice Ali read the Presidential notice, relieving Thakur of his charge as justice of the high

court, and some of the other judges also spoke, praising Thakur's work.

Farooq was sitting in the front row, facing the judges' bench. To his left sat his father, and to his right, Beg. Farooq quietly asked his father which of the men was Thakur. Sheikh Abdullah whispered back that he did not know.

Although baffled by this reply, Farooq quickly recovered his poise and asked his father how had he chosen a man he did not know? Sheikh Abdullah said that he had done it on the advice of Beg Saheb, who had spoken highly of Thakur. He told his son to ask Beg to point out Thakur to him. He did.

There was a minor hitch in Jammu before Sheikh Abdullah took over power, and that had to do with a statement made by Indira Gandhi, reported by All India Radio, that relations between the Union of India and Kashmir would continue as before. It led to demonstrations in Srinagar, condemning the accord. Sheikh Abdullah was furious, and accused Mir Qasim of projecting it as if he had sold out Kashmir for the chair of Chief Minister. Although he had already been elected head of the Assembly by the Congress legislature party, in the presence of the Congress President Dev Kant Baruah and Union Minister Karan Singh, he refused to take the oath of office.

Mir Qasim made amends; he rushed between Delhi and Jammu, and eventually pacified Sheikh Saheb. But now there was going to be no Congress-NC coalition ruling the state; Sheikh Abdullah and his three ministers — Beg, Thakur, and a Ladakhi, Salem Norbu (who was Ambassador to Mongolia) — would run the administration till elections were held. For the failure of this coalition to emerge, Indira would never forgive Mir Qasim.

In any case, the clash of political objectives with the Congress occurred once Sheikh Abdullah converted most of the Plebiscite Front to the National Conference. The conflict did not take long to emerge — it was visible in the

government running the coalition, as it was at the political level in the Valley. Flashpoints occurred frequently, and sparks often flew. In this process, Sheikh Abdullah came to be attacked, for the first time, by the mainstream in the Valley. Opponents popped up in the political arena, in the media and in almost all fields. In fact, it was the accord that made him vulnerable to attack; for the first time, he was perceived to be weak.

Farooq had not returned yet; he would only do so in the summer of 1976, when his new house, built to Molly's comfort and liking, was ready.

In June 1975, during his final year in England, Mrs. Indira Gandhi imposed Emergency rule on the nation. T.N. Kaul, the Ambassador to the United States of America, was on his way back to India, and had stopped in London en route. He wanted to meet Farooq, and invited him to the residence of the Indian High Commissioner to Britain, B.K. Nehru. It was Farooq's first visit to the High Commissioner's house in Kensington Place, but not his last meeting with B.K. Nehru. He later took over as Governor of J&K, and when Farooq became Chief Minister, he would become another important father-figure in Farooq's life.

At Kensington Place, Farooq met the Nehrus, West Bengal Chief Minister S.S. Ray's wife, Maya, and T.N. Kaul. They had invited several Labour and Conservative MPs over for tea, to convince them of the need for Emergency in India. Kaul was particularly enthusiastic about it.

Characteristically, Farooq chose to be honest rather than discreet. He bluntly asked how it was possible that the Emergency could be good when it meant censorship of newspapers, which meant people had to rely on gossip for their news, and lies were rampant because nobody knew what comprised the truth. Farooq was immediately shouted down by his fellow Kashmiris.

So, when he arrived in India, he was annoyed. Everything was hush-hush, people were afraid to talk openly. Farooq

went to parties, and found that people looked over their shoulders before saying anything. After having lived for 12 years in England's free atmosphere, Farooq could not believe what was happening in India. Stories he heard made his blood boil, and his ambivalence towards Indira, in stark contrast to the respect and admiration he had held for her father, grew.

There was an NC MP, Shamim Ahmed Shamim, representing Srinagar in Delhi. He was tremendously critical of the government and the Emergency. He was a learned man and a journalist, and neither in his columns nor in Parliament did he mince words about the evil he felt was being perpetrated. His stature grew, particularly since many of the other anti-establishment leaders were either in jail or were on their way to it.

In contrast to Shamim was Dr. Karan Singh. During the Emergency, one of the most hated activities taking place was the programme of mass sterilisation and vasectomies, in which many people, in order to complete their quotas and prove their loyalty to Indira and her megalomaniac son Sanjay, were targeting Muslims. Horror stories of forced sterilisations were doing the rounds.

Karan Singh, in those days, was a busy man, as he, being the Minister for Health and Family Planning, was one of the major movers of the family planning programme. He met Farooq and expressed the opinion that Sanjay was the rising star of Indian politics, and if one wanted to make progress, one had to get close to him.

Farooq was taken aback by this attitude, since he felt that Karan Singh was a man to whom God had given everything: he had been *Sadar-e-Riyasat*, and then Governor, for nearly 18 years, making him the virtual Maharaja of the state of J&K. He had all the wealth a man could want; yet he felt that the need to prostrate himself before Sanjay Gandhi, merely because he thought he might be the future leader of India.

Farooq was still in Delhi when Thakur asked him to accompany him to Lucknow. Farooq went, even though his

father had asked him not to go anywhere, and, especially not to say anything controversial, for the powers in Delhi would interpret that Farooq was speaking on behalf of Sheikh Abdullah.

Thakur had studied law in Lucknow, and was going back to his university, where the Law Society was felicitating him for his achievements. He was now J&K's Finance Minister. The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, N.D. Tiwari, was also expected to attend the function. Farooq, thinking nothing of the matter, went. The chief guests were Thakur, Tiwari, the UP Chief Justice, and the President of the University Law Society. They asked Farooq to join them on the rostrum.

Thakur spoke first, and in complimentary terms about the Prime Minister. Perhaps, if Farooq had had wider political experience, he might have realised, right there, where Thakur's loyalties lay and that he would one day, if he was not already, become Indira's man.

What Farooq did feel was that the speech was a gutless one, full of praise for the Emergency. He felt even more annoyed when the committee that welcomed Thakur also made a sedate speech praising him. Then came Tiwari's turn, but before that, Farooq was suddenly asked to say a few words. Farooq got up, and said that Thakur was trying to cover the truth.

There was a murmur in the audience, and the dignitaries squirmed in their chairs. Farooq went on to condemn the Emergency under which you could not say what you wanted to, and if you dared to try, you would be behind bars. Farooq added that Thakur could not have possibly been in fear of being put in jail, and, therefore, it was expected that he would not have the guts to say anything against the Emergency. Farooq also remarked that he had spent many years in England, where he had experienced freedom. Freedom was responsibility, he said, but here he could see that freedom was being choked. The press could not report the truth, and nobody knew what was really happening.

Farooq's speech went down very well with the crowd of lawyers, who were electrified that in the prevailing atmosphere someone had dared to speak his mind, and that too, in front of the Chief Minister and other representatives of the government. The dignitaries, at a reception given by Tiwari later at his residence, however, told Farooq he was naïve and having been away, perhaps did not understand that the Emergency was necessary for the good of the country. Once things were normal, they assured him, the country would return to democracy.

The Intelligence Bureau informed Indira about Farooq's views, and suddenly he was not trusted any more. In fact, he was kept under surveillance. When he went home to Srinagar, Sheikh Abdullah was furious that his son had dared to behave contrary to his instructions. "Let us deal with our own problems instead of trying to find solutions for others," Sheikh Abdullah told him.

This is not to say that Sheikh Abdullah was not critical of some of the actions carried out during the Emergency. For instance, he visited Turkman Gate area in Delhi with Mohammad Yunus (a relative of Badshah Khan, who later became Chairman of the Trade Fair Authority of India), and a Delhi Development Authority (DDA) official named Jagmohan. When he saw how mercilessly people had been treated, it brought back memories of the holocaust, and he was forced to remark that it would have been better to put these people in the gas chamber; because that way, they would have suffered less. His utterances pleased neither Indira nor Jagmohan.

Before Farooq went back to Kashmir, another incident occurred which demonstrated to him how politics had changed since the days of Jawaharlal Nehru. He had gone to Bombay to collect his belongings which had arrived from England by ship. He was staying at the Raj Bhavan, with the Maharashtra Governor Ali Yavar Jang, a learned man who

knew Shiekh Abdullah and who shared his views on Indian history with Farooq during their morning walks.

During his stay, Farooq called on the Maharashtra Chief Minister S.B. Chavan. When he reached Chavan's office, he found the state Congress General Secretary, Rajni Patel, also there. And although Chavan was seated at his desk, it was quite clear that the man wielding the power was not Chavan, but Patel.

Patel was building the Nehru Planetarium at that time. He was using Chavan's phone, calling up industrialists and demanding money for the construction of the Planetarium. All the while, he was also telling Chavan whom he should meet, and how he should schedule his meetings. Farooq was a witness to this sorry spectacle and came out feeling saddened. It was obvious to him that Chavan was a mere figurehead and it was the state party General Secretary who was the real boss. This incident made a lasting impact on him.

In the meantime, Sheikh Abdullah wanted to go in, as early as possible, for Assembly elections. He wanted to have his own Assembly, and did not want to depend on the Congress any longer. His advisers told him to go in for civic elections as a first step towards Assembly polls. But such a matter had to be decided by the Congress-NC Coordination Committee that had been set up in Delhi after the accord, and of which Home Minister Om Mehta and M.A. Beg were the main members. The committee decided that elections were not possible, and while still in Delhi, Beg gave a statement to this effect because too many anti-social elements were still at large.

Sheikh Abdullah felt that the statement was extremely dangerous, because it could be used, at any time, as an excuse to block elections. Polls could thus be postponed forever. By the time Beg landed back in Srinagar, Sheikh Abdullah had decided to reverse the decision. Beg was very angry, but saw the point. The problem now was how to publicly go back on the statement without embarrassing Beg.

The solution worked out was this: since Sheikh Abdullah was the only member of the still nascent NC Working Committee, they decided to put the Coordination Committee's decision before it. Sheikh Abdullah turned it down, and Delhi was told that the NC Working Committee had turned down the objection to civic elections. This was one of the instances when the Congress was peeved with Sheikh Abdullah.

Later on, several Congress legislators defected and formed an independent group in the Assembly. Among them was a man named Abdul Ghani Lone, who would, in time, traverse the entire political spectrum of J&K, and then ask people, during the post-1990 movement, to support him! Sheikh Abdullah had promised Indira that he would not take the defectors into the NC. A day or two later, however, Sheikh Abdullah attended a function of the legislators, and announced that he would admit them to his party.

This infuriated Indira, who was, by now, determined to dismiss Sheikh Abdullah. Mir Qasim threw up his hands and said that the accord was doomed. Governor L.K. Jha was annoyed, and claimed that a breach of trust had been committed. For two days they did not speak to each other, but a truce was finally reached, and Sheikh Abdullah did agree not to take in those legislators. Relations, however, were extremely strained, and Sheikh Abdullah was even more eager now to hold the elections.

Farooq, meanwhile, came to Srinagar, and immersed himself in the activities of the Sher-e-Kashmir Medical Institute Trust, which had become a vibrant organisation and was building an institute of medical sciences. In January 1977, he went abroad on a trip to procure electronic equipment for the proposed institute, and when he returned to India, he found his father waiting for him in Delhi.

During this visit to the capital, Sheikh Abdullah met Indira, and when he returned, he was beaming with excitement. He, however, refused to talk about what had transpired. Shamim was also there. He was one man in whom Sheikh Abdullah

had a lot of faith. It was said, with justification, that Shamim could say what he wanted to, to the Chief Minister, and get away with it, for he was extremely intelligent and chose his words well.

It was only at Shamim's urging that Sheikh Abdullah finally divulged to everybody present in his room that an important announcement was going to be made that day: Indira had agreed to dissolve Parliament and call for general elections. The next day, there was much excitement in the country. The Emergency had been lifted.

The euphoria seemed to elude one person, however: Shamim appeared anxious, and every day would do the rounds of Farooq's room. Though he dropped in at least three times a day, he said nothing much. Finally, Farooq was constrained to ask him what was on his mind.

Shamim was worried that Farooq would be contesting the Lok Sabha polls. Farooq answered that he could not, since he was still a British citizen, holding a United Kingdom passport. He also told Shamim, however, that the party, which would decide whom to give the ticket to, was annoyed with the incumbent MP, and that if Shamim wanted the nomination, he could advance his case with the party executive.

Finally, Shamim did not get the ticket; Begum Abdullah did. Sheikh Abdullah calculated that he needed someone reliable and loyal to be in Delhi; someone who would be able to sort out the problems that might arise between Srinagar and Delhi. He was assuming, of course, that Indira would return to power, although with a very slim majority.

This made Shamim bitter, and as a result, Shamim's entire family — a well-educated one from Shopian — turned against Sheikh Abdullah. Shamim's Urdu newspaper became anti-Sheikh Abdullah; his relations, who were journalists, also became anti-Abdullah, particularly his nephew, who came very close to Sheikh Abdullah's nemesis and state Congress chief, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, and as a result, was rabidly anti-Farooq during the 1980s.

With his mother going off to Delhi, it was Farooq who took on the role of a mediator between his father and many of the people who were unable to see Sheikh Abdullah themselves. Farooq had no formal designation, but became patron of a youth organisation called the Students' Federation, of which Ali Mohammad Sagar was the General Secretary. Many in the NC objected to the organisation, as it was not under the command of the main party: they felt that like Sanjay Gandhi's followers, the members of the Students' Federation would one day contest elections and knock off the older MLAs and MPs. Rumours were spread that the federation comprised IB agents, and that the Congress party had infiltrated the organisation.

Even Farooq's cousin, Sheikh Nazir, was bitterly opposed to the organisation, as he felt its members would not work for the betterment of the NC. In fact, some of its members had been indulging in corrupt practices, which included going to engineers, and getting work done on the name of their organisation's patron, Farooq Abdullah. Farooq claimed that such things were the doing of only a handful of people, but Nazir, amongst others, still felt that the organisation should be converted into a formal youth body of the NC. Farooq, however, prevailed on Beg and Sheikh Abdullah, to let the organisation be as it was.

Following the 1977 general elections, the Congress was ousted and the Janata Party came to power. Morarji Desai became the new Prime Minister. Indira's defeat became the reason advanced by J&K Congress President Mufti Mohammad Sayeed for his new action plan: the state Congress would withdraw support to Sheikh Abdullah and his three NC colleagues, form its own government (with Mufti as the Chief Minister), and turn J&K into a launching pad for Indira's return to power. Although Indira initially disagreed with a plan to topple Sheikh Abdullah, Mufti's sales-pitch — "the platform for Indira's re-emergence" — finally became too attractive to resist.

Sheikh Abdullah, meanwhile, had come to Delhi, and met both Indira and Morarji. When he heard what was in the offing, he carefully read out his state's Constitution: it stipulated that if Sheikh Abdullah were to go to the Governor, while still holding the confidence of the house, and call for its dissolution, his advice would be binding on the Governor. That is what he did; and since the Janata Party was in power in New Delhi, fresh state elections were agreed upon. Governor L.K. Jha was interested in early polls, and within three months, they were organised.

During Governor's rule, Foreign Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee visited Kashmir, and held a meeting at the Broadway Hotel, where he told people about his recent visit to Pakistan. Although Vajpayee was a member of the Jan Sangh, which had always favoured quicker integration of J&K with India, he reiterated that Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which guaranteed Kashmir's special status, was there to stay. It was a refreshing speech.

The Congress, on the other hand, was heartbroken and demoralised because its efforts to usurp power had not worked according to plan. Strangely, as the polls approached, the Janata Party tried hard to come to an understanding with Sheikh Abdullah, with two people — Devi Das Thakur and the Jammu NC chief, Balraj Puri — pushing the Janata Party's case. A delegation of the Janata Party top brass flew in from Delhi, in high spirits at the time because of their recent nation-wide electoral victory. They had to return empty-handed, for Sheikh Abdullah paid no heed to them and decided to fight the elections alone.

The 1977 Assembly elections were a milestone in Centre-state relations: they were free and fair. Even though Home Minister Charan Singh had pressured the Union cabinet to try and rig them, Morarji did not allow him to do so. So heavy, in fact, was the pressure to rig the polls that it led to a quarrel in the state Janata Party at the time; among

Shamim Ahmed Shamim, Abdul Ghani Lone and Moulvi Iftekar Ansari, as to which of them would take over as Chief Minister!

As in the Centre, the state Janata coalition was a patchwork of nine parties that were opposed to the NC. Even Mirwaiz Moulvi Farooq's Awami Action Committee had joined this coalition, and each of the Janata candidates was an anti-Sheikh Abdullah element that the Centre foisted on the state, in an attempt to build up a rival centre of power.

Morarji visited Kashmir during the campaigning, and went to the Mirwaiz's house to discuss the electoral tie-up. A green turban was put atop Morarji's head, and the women started singing a Kashmiri couplet, which roughly translated means: "God is kind to the green turban you wear, that Pakistan's warrior has come." Morarji was baffled; he asked what the "Pakistan" in the song referred to, and the Mirwaiz quickly lied that the song the women were singing had in it a line which went, "he has come to destroy Pakistan".

The only non-participants in the polls were the growing number of disgruntled youth. Sheikh Abdullah had to put many trouble-makers like Shabir Shah behind bars to silence them.

On his first campaign tour to Budgam, Sheikh Abdullah was not feeling well. He, however, refused to tell anybody about it, until things became serious. He was already diabetic and hypertensive and needed daily insulin injections. While en route to Wadrahaal, he addressed meetings and large crowds, and Farooq noticed that he clutched his chest a number of times. When Farooq asked him if he was alright, his father answered that he was, but he did not look completely well. After a number of hectic meetings, when they reached home, Sheikh Abdullah finally called for the doctors. The team, led by Dr. Mohammad Ali Jaan, declared that he had suffered a massive heart attack.

On the request of the Governor and the advice of the local doctors, a number of specialists were flown in from Delhi by a special aircraft of the Government of India. Sheikh Abdullah

was advised rest. The doctors said he was out of danger but advised him against undertaking the planned tour of Doda district. Farooq and his mother decided to go in his place. Though Begum Abdullah was unwilling to leave her husband's side, she was persuaded to campaign for the NC candidates.

While they were addressing a meeting in Bhandarwah, Farooq and his mother suddenly saw an Indian Air Force helicopter descend near their venue, and they were told that Sheikh Abdullah's condition had turned serious, and they had to return immediately. It was an hour-long flight, and a very tense one for Begum Abdullah and Farooq.

Word had already spread that Sheikh Abdullah was acutely ill. By the time they reached Badami Bagh Cantonment and were driving home, large crowds had begun to converge on their house. Fearing the worst, Begum Abdullah prayed that they had not come too late. It was with great difficulty that she controlled her emotions. Even Farooq felt deep down that his father had already passed away.

Dr. Jaan told Farooq that Sheikh Abdullah had been asking for his wife and son, hence they had been called back.

Mother and son went in, and under the gaze of the cardiologists from AIIMS, they told Sheikh Abdullah that Doda was fine. He was not allowed to talk, and the doctors explained that rather than coming under control, the cardiac disease was continuing, as was the pain. They said that they had decided to take Sheikh Abdullah to AIIMS in Delhi for observation and treatment.

Farooq was opposed to the idea. He said it would be better if Sheikh Abdullah stayed in Srinagar, for if he were to die in Delhi, word would spread in the Valley that Delhi had killed him, which would have an adverse effect on Kashmir's relationship with the rest of India. Hence it was decided that one of the doctors would stay back in the Valley, to observe Sheikh Abdullah, and bring him back to stability.

Finally, his condition stabilised and, in fact, his falling ill created a tremendous sympathy wave for the NC. For, in

those elections, more than ever before, Sheikh Abdullah went all out to portray himself as the protector of the Kashmiri Muslim identity.

His strategy was actually based on stirring up feelings of insecurity among the people. He made Article 370 his election plank, and frightened the Kashmiri Muslims into believing that outsiders from India would come into the Valley, buy up their land, and eventually outnumber the Kashmiri Muslims, driving them to extinction. His lieutenant, M.A. Beg, went around with a green handkerchief and salt in his fist; though he did not say anything, the understood message was that he referred to Pakistan. The cultural identity-conscious population got the message.

All of them began to feel that the future was uncertain without Sheikh Abdullah. Prayers were held in mosques around the Valley, and an awesome number of sheep were sacrificed so that his life could be spared by God.

The NC then hit upon a novel ploy: a recorded one-line message from Sheikh Abdullah, calling upon the people to preserve *Kashmiriyat* by voting NC, was distributed to each and every NC candidate. Also helping the NC cause were the speeches by the Janata Party leaders. Jagjivan Ram's speech in Baderwah, for instance, had a tremendous effect. In it he mentioned that Sheikh Abdullah was ill, his heart had given way, and it was time he rested.

Farooq, too, was campaigning hectically. Everywhere he went, he heard slogans such as "3 June *albani zain*", that on 3 June (the day of polling) it would be the plough (the NC symbol) that would win. When that day arrived, and votes were being cast, Sheikh Abdullah sent some of his old colleagues like Ghulam Mohammad Chakan, and some of their sons like Sheikh Rashid and Ghani Shaidad, to visit Beg's constituency in Anantnag and see how he was doing.

They returned and told Sheikh Abdullah their predictions about Bijbehara, Budgam, and other places, but he wanted to know about Beg, and they said that Beg would lose. He

dismissed them, and after they left, he quietly told Farooq that he was sure that Beg would win.

The day of counting came, and Farooq went to Gulmarg. All the tension due to campaigning and also due to his father's illness had built up, so he decided to take his wife and children, as well as a friend named Dr. Prem Sikand, a surgeon involved with the medical trust, and go up for a little holiday. They planned on catching the results in Gulmarg itself.

In the morning, Farooq played golf, following which he took a nap. Around 2.30 p.m., Dr. Sikand nudged him awake and said that the results had started pouring in on the radio. Groggily, Farooq inquired what had happened in Anantnag. Dr. Sikand answered that Beg had lost. He gave Farooq the results of five constituencies, and said that only two candidates had won.

Farooq was furious. He opened the door, told his friend to get out and said that he did not want to be disturbed again.

Dr. Sikand laughed and said: "Get up, you damned fool. The NC has won all five seats. You are leading in most other places; it looks like a landslide victory."

Farooq sprang up, put on his clothes, and ordered his family to pack their bags. They drove back to Srinagar, and right from Tangmarg onwards, they found euphoric people celebrating. Farooq had never seen anything like this before.

He thought of running an errand before going home — he needed some light bulbs, and so went to one Baba's shop on Hari Singh High Street. As soon as he got out of the car, he found people had climbed on top of it and were jumping with joy. His children started screaming because they thought they were under attack; Molly got into a frenzy. Farooq had to finally shoo away the revellers.

Weaving through the cars, buses and trucks full of celebrating people, they reached Sheikh Abdullah's house, and Farooq quickly went inside, past the guards. Hundreds of people had come pouring in to congratulate his father, and

though the doctors had told him to keep quiet and be relaxed, he first would not listen. By ten o'clock that night, when the counting was stopped for the day, it was clear that the NC was on its way to a tremendous victory.

During the election, Mirwaiz Farooq and some of the Congress workers had spread the rumour that Sheikh Abdullah had actually died, and that he had been kept on ice; he would only be declared dead, they claimed, after the elections were over. Other rumours said that he was paralysed with a stroke. To refute such untruths, press photographers were called home to take pictures of Sheikh Saheb, for television was still not a common phenomenon in those days. The photos published in the newspapers the next day showed Sheikh Abdullah playing with his granddaughter, with both his hands moving, to underline the point that he was neither dead nor paralysed.

Yet, the rumours did not die, and it was decided that Sheikh Abdullah would go to the Polo Ground where a stage would be erected, so that he would climb up and show himself to his supporters. For this purpose a bus was employed. He walked on to the top of the bus from the house itself and it was driven to the platform on the Polo Ground.

Sheikh Abdullah, sitting on a chair atop the bus, next to Beg, saw the mammoth crowd, and was beside himself with joy. Disobeying the doctors, he got up from the chair and made an emotional speech, thanking the people for their trust in him.

The elections, however, were not over yet. Farooq was called aside by Kishan Kant, the coordinator for the Janata Party, who told him that many of his party's leaders were holed up in the government guest house, worried that they would be lynched for having worked against the NC. Krishan Kant asked Farooq to keep his visit a secret, and to come to the guest house, and reassure the politicians that no harm would come to them. Farooq consulted his father, who was all for giving such a reassurance. In the flush of victory, he

became magnanimous, and told Farooq to ask his political opponents to work with him in building the state.

Farooq went to the guest house, where all the Janata leaders were having a loud discussion with Maulana Masoodi, telling him that their lives were in danger. Farooq walked in, under the glare of each Janata Party politician, and reassured them that not a hair on their heads would be harmed, and that they could stay as long as they liked at the guest house. Though nobody really believed Farooq, the shrewd Maulana, thanked him for coming, and told him to convey to Sheikh Abdullah their gratitude for this gesture of goodwill.

12

The Rise of the Son

Though Sheikh Abdullah was able to create employment opportunities for many of his people, on the whole, he was a bad administrator. He ruled only by his authority; he had no administrative acumen in the modern sense of the term. Undoubtedly, the state administration saw the best of times because his moral authority was unchallenged, and that worked.

For instance, if there was a demonstration which the police could not control, Sheikh Abdullah would personally reach there and see that things were brought under control. An example of this approach was witnessed on 26 July 1980: there was a serious clash between some Army personnel and civilians in Srinagar, after some taxi-drivers thrashed an Army driver at Lal Chowk. The Army men went on a rampage, burned taxis and fired on shops, and there were demonstrations; it seemed as if Srinagar would go up in flames.

On the day that tensions, and people's anger, were running really high, Sheikh Abdullah had the audacity to go to Lal Chowk, where he gave a speech. Admitting that there was a problem, he explained it by saying that obviously some Jan Sanghi mentality had infiltrated the Indian forces, which otherwise had been christened in Kashmir, baptised in Kashmir, and had fought for the Valley in 1947. The Sheikh's attempt was foolhardy, and nobody else would have dared it, but he managed to defuse the situation. And this incident was characteristic of how his administration worked.

The above incident is also interesting, as it marked a watershed for a 13-year-old boy, studying in the eighth standard, who narrowly escaped a thrashing by the Army men, and thus participated in the demonstrations and stone-pelting. The boy was Mohammad Yasin Malik, who would become a key figure in turning the movement of 1989 into a full-fledged armed one.

In the final years of his rule, Sheikh Abdullah was exposed to serious charges of corruption, maladministration and nepotism. All his detractors had to do was ask people what Sheikh Abdullah's property had been before he came to power, and how much it had increased after his reign. Whether the charges were true or not became inconsequential, for the popular perception that gained ground in the Valley was that corruption was rampant.

Yet he remained the only viable option for Kashmiris, and perhaps to cement the relationship further, he planned and completed the reconstruction of the political symbol of Kashmiri Muslim identity, with which he had become identified since 1931, namely, the Hazratbal shrine. The structure was taken down in 1968, soon after his release from prison, save a small structure within which the *Moi-e-Muqqadas* was kept.

Subsequently, Kashmir suffered many floods for which his detractors blamed him, saying that the destruction of the original shrine had brought God's wrath upon the area. Sheikh

Abdullah, in turn, pointed out the hypocrisy of his critics, even calling them idolators, for when a model for the new shrine was unveiled, the same people started worshipping it. His partymen collected funds, door-to-door, for the new shrine, and about one crore rupees was collected. In 1978, a magnificent marble shrine was completed, which now stands on the banks of the Dal Lake as the pride of the Valley.

Earlier in 1977, Sheikh Abdullah had invited Indira to Srinagar for a holiday. She was in very low spirits unable to reconcile her electoral loss with what she felt was the gratitude the electorate owed her. Despite all the differences the two had had during the past few years, Sheikh Abdullah showed her sympathy; perhaps, because she no longer represented Delhi, and thus the consequent Centre-state strains that existed between the two were, for the time being, submerged.

She also absolved herself by convincing Sheikh Abdullah that she had had nothing to do with the near withdrawal of support that had taken place earlier that year. She laid the blame on Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, Mohammad Shafi Qureshi and Dr. Karan Singh, at the same time noting that Mir Qasim had been against the move.

Farooq was deputed to chaperone Indira around during her stay in Kashmir. By this time, he had started to articulate his political views. He felt that nothing could be achieved in Kashmir unless it received full cooperation from the Centre. He also felt that someone had to act as a medium of communication between Srinagar and Delhi, for there had been too many instances of Delhi being misled on what was going on in the Valley, resulting in ham-handed behaviour by the Centre, and its backlash among the people of Kashmir. The biggest losers in all this, he felt, were the people ruling Kashmir, who had to strive to retain a balance between what Delhi wanted and what their own people desired.

In order to make the job easier, Farooq began to feel that what the Kashmiri Muslim leadership needed was a reliable

voice in Delhi, with access to power. The MPs who had been there in the past had been doing a competent job, but the suspicions remained. Having studied outside Kashmir, especially in Jaipur, and feeling that he understood both points of view, Farooq felt he should be the person to establish contact with the authority in Delhi.

Farooq also felt that Indira would return to power. For this, he once became the subject of ridicule. It happened on a visit to Moscow in 1977 where, during a meeting with various Soviet dignitaries, the Ambassador, I.K. Gujral, said that there was no question of Indira returning to power. Farooq, however, contradicted him, and added that it was the very people who had thrown her out who would pick her up and ask her to again take hold of the reins of power.

Everyone attacked Farooq for his views. Gujral was furious and remarked to the Soviet dignitaries that Farooq could not be expected to know politics because he was only a doctor. Farooq could not refute that, but three years later, in 1980, when Indira Gandhi regained power, he had the last laugh.

Thus, during Indira's visit to the Valley, Farooq was keen on building bridges with the lady he felt sure would make a comeback as the Prime Minister of India, even though he personally felt ambivalent towards her.

The day Indira was to land in Srinagar, Farooq went to see Dr. Karan Singh at his house, Karan Mahal. He felt that Dr. Karan Singh and his wife should be present at the airport to receive her, since he had been in her cabinet for ten years, and been head of the state of J&K for 18 years before that, thanks only to the intervention of her father. Dr. Karan Singh, however, wanted to know if Sheikh Abdullah would come to the airport; Farooq replied that the entire family would be there to receive Indira.

Farooq, Begum Abdullah, Tariq and their sisters were at the airport when Indira Gandhi landed. Dr. Karan Singh was not there. Things did not appear to be starting off well, but Farooq hid his discomfiture behind a smile, and drove Indira

to the guest house where his father and M.A. Beg received and welcomed her.

Farooq went straight to Karan Mahal from there, and asked Dr. Karan Singh why he had not come to the airport. "Because Sheikh Saheb did not go," was his reply. Farooq could not believe that Dr. Karan Singh still had these pretensions.

Indira had a pleasant time in Kashmir. She and Farooq visited most of the shrines, of different religions, and she spent time with her party workers. She saw an exhibition of the *Srinagar Times'* cartoonist, Bashir Baba, and was amused by the caricatures which were critical of her. She even addressed a meeting in Kashmir. In general, both father and son tried to raise her spirits: Sheikh Abdullah told her that she was Nehru's daughter, that India expected far more from her than dejection; that she had a legacy, with which she had to push forward.

When she left, Farooq saw quite a change in her. The person who had landed at Srinagar airport looking low spirited was going back looking radiant. Her week-long sojourn had infused a new life into her, after which she never looked back. The momentum built up from that point onwards and culminated in her electoral victory in 1980.

Chaperoning Indira was not the only preparation that Farooq was undertaking for his own political career. With everyone alive to the fact that Sheikh Abdullah had become very old, had already suffered a heart attack, and was in the final stages of his life, the fight for succession to his throne began. The NC became riven with factionalism during the final days of the ailing leader.

The first to go was M.A. Beg. He had been Sheikh Abdullah's confidant for almost 45 years. He was the next seniormost politician in Kashmir, and as natural a successor as there could be. As a result, he was not liked very much by Ghulam Mohammad Shah, Sheikh Abdullah's son-in-law, who coveted the leadership of the party himself.

The way Farooq saw the situation was thus: Beg began to get bitter the moment the 1975 accord was signed, for he figured that Sheikh Abdullah would now move aside and let Beg take over as Chief Minister of the state. That did not happen. Beg made issues of many things, and many of his activities came to be perceived as being anti-Abdullah, including the fact that he named his dog Abdullah.

The charge against Beg was that he was conniving with Delhi. As he and Mehta headed the Coordination Committee, it was natural that he spent a lot of time in Delhi, but whatever he did there, both G.M. Shah and D.D. Thakur (allies for the moment) filled Sheikh Abdullah's ears with suspicions that he was hatching a plot which would be a repeat performance of 1953.

Sheikh Abdullah and his son (who would no doubt have liked to see Beg out of the way, during his own climb to the top) were convinced that Beg and Indira Gandhi were now conspiring to dislodge the Sheikh, and Beg would turn out to be another Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad.

Beg returned from one of his trips to Delhi. It was a Monday, and a cabinet meeting was scheduled for later in the day. Farooq was at the airport to receive Beg and told him that since he (Beg) was under a lot of suspicion, instead of going home and then to the Secretariat, he ought to go straight to the Chief Minister's office and clear his position; otherwise he feared a lot of damage could be done in those few precious hours. As far as Farooq was concerned, if Beg had done nothing against Sheikh Abdullah or the NC, then he had nothing to worry about.

Beg insisted on going home and put off seeing the Chief Minister till later. It seemed that he knew now, in his heart of hearts, that Sheikh Abdullah knew about his desire to overthrow the government and take over the administration himself.

Farooq dropped Beg at home and went to the Secretariat. His father came out of the cabinet room and asked him whether he had gone to receive Beg Saheb.

His son replied in the affirmative.

Sheikh Abdullah exploded. He told Farooq what he felt Beg had been up to. "For all these 45 years I have trusted him more than your mother. I have told him things I have not told anybody except God. That is how close we have been. And now, this is what he has done."

Farooq apologised as he explained to his father, that he would never have gone had he known what his father had just told him. He said that he had merely told Beg that had he (Beg) done nothing against the party or party President, he should have no fear and should talk to Sheikh Abdullah immediately.

"Don't you realise that I feel as if I've lost a part of my body?" his father said. It was a painful decision — he was about to dismiss Beg — but one that had to be taken.

On 26 September 1978, Mirza Afzal Beg left the cabinet and formed his own party called the Inquilabi National Conference. He was destined to spend the rest of his days in anonymity, though, he did return to the NC, an old man, on 28 September 1981. Towards the end of his life, he fell seriously ill, with only a servant and his wife to take care of him. It was Farooq who urged his father that Beg should not be forgotten, and when he died, on 11 June 1982 (a few months before Sheikh Abdullah did), Farooq pleaded that a holiday be declared in the state in memory of Beg. A state funeral was organised, and the body was carried, with all honours, to his home town Anantnag.

In 1980, Farooq Abdullah contested his first elections, and won unopposed. As a result, he was one of the first Members of Parliament elected to the seventh Lok Sabha in New Delhi.

Sheikh Abdullah was initially bitterly opposed to his son joining politics. He knew Farooq's limitations. Trying to dissuade him, he likened politics to a flowing river, one that was difficult to get out of once one jumped in. Either one flowed with the current, or one swam against it. The latter, Sheikh Abdullah said, was very difficult to do.

Farooq, however, was in no mood to be dissuaded. Sure that Indira was coming back to power, he reiterated what he now strongly believed in: there was a need to snuff out the misunderstandings that had marred the relationship between Delhi and Srinagar. "Had that not been the whole point of locating Begum Abdullah in the Lok Sabha in 1977?" he asked his father.

Begum Abdullah, on her part, was now quite fed up with Parliament. She missed home, and felt alienated, not being able to look after the house and her husband. She wanted to return.

It was under these circumstances that Farooq decided to go in her place and continue the efforts at building bridges. He felt that he had an advantage because he had come close to Indira Gandhi and understood her, having been attached to her for seven days while she was in Kashmir. Indira, too, he felt, was fond of him. He submitted his forms on the last day for filing nominations, and, as already stated, was elected unopposed.

As there was no need for a campaign in his own constituency, he went and campaigned in other parts of J&K. He campaigned for Indira Gandhi in other parts of the country, particularly in UP and Bihar. He campaigned in Sanjay Gandhi's constituency, Amethi. The people looking after Mrs. Gandhi's constituency were M.L. Fotedar and Dharendra Brahmachari (two individuals who would later cause problems for Farooq when he became Chief Minister). But for now, wherever he went, he found a wave in favour of Indira Gandhi.

He was basically reciprocating the favour Indira Gandhi had done by also campaigning for the NC candidate, D.D. Thakur, in Udhampur, when she came to Jammu to campaign for her own party's candidate (perhaps this was the time when she and Thakur became close). On this very visit, when she met Sheikh Abdullah at his house, she made a request that Farooq be allowed to campaign for her. Sheikh Abdullah

replied that Farooq would answer for himself. Farooq was more than willing.

One would have thought that a cordial relationship with Farooq would have dissuaded Indira Gandhi from interfering in Kashmir during the 1980s. Yet, the sad historical context within which she existed would not allow it. Her party, the Indian National Congress, had always stood for centralisation of political power, whereas a diverse country like India needed greater federalisation, and nowhere was this more evident than in J&K. How this larger dialectic manifested itself at the time was as follows: the J&K Congress unit wanted to come to power in the state without having to wait for elections (the state Constitution provided for a six-year term for the legislature, a year longer than assemblies in the other states of India). Thus the state unit chief, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, put pressure on Indira to use, or rather misuse, her power as Prime Minister of the Union to push the existing government out of office.

The first such indication came in April 1980, when Farooq and his father were visiting some holy places in Iraq and Saudi Arabia. In Iraq, they met President Saddam Hussein, who asked whether he could provide financial assistance for Kashmir. Sheikh Abdullah felt that any such assistance should come through the Government of India, so that there was no cause for any misunderstanding. They then visited Karbala, Najaf, and Basra, where the Shahi Baghdad was buried, and for whom the Kashmiris have built a shrine in Khanyar. They also performed *Umrah* at Saudi Arabia.

Just before they arrived in Iraq, however, Indira Gandhi had sent the Youth Congress General Secretary, a Kashmiri Congress politician named Ghulam Nabi Azad, to Iraq. Whatever transpired between Azad and the Iraqis, Sheikh Abdullah came away feeling that Azad had tried to scuttle his trip by creating some misunderstanding with Saddam. He was extremely bitter with Indira Gandhi on this point.

Most of all, however, it was her son Sanjay Gandhi (under whom the Youth Congress had become an efficient body) who was responsible for delivering regular pinpricks. Intrigues and demonstrations started, and Sheikh Abdullah was forced to make a speech in which he gave a warning to that "young boy", making it clear to him that his attempts to destabilise the state government would never succeed. Nevertheless, Sanjay did everything he could to provoke Sheikh Abdullah: he even promised to bring back the food subsidy, which Sheikh Abdullah had declared he would remove.

Sanjay Gandhi's declaration made Sheikh Abdullah's job more difficult, and he became incensed. It was difficult to explain to the people that for Kashmir, instead of utilising Rs. 25 to 28 crore for subsidies, his administration wanted to build bridges, roads, schools and hospitals. When he said as much, Sanjay Gandhi retaliated by pointing out that the government, instead of building all those things it had mentioned, was frittering away its resources on something quite removed from most people's lives: a convention complex.

Sheikh Abdullah countered by pointing out that a medical institute was being built at Soura, because the poor people of Kashmir could not be expected to go to Tata's Institute in Bombay for cancer treatment; or even to the Post-graduate Institute (PGI) of Medicine and Research in Chandigarh, or the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Delhi. This statement also was criticised by Sanjay Gandhi.

Sanjay Gandhi was merely doing what his party wanted him to do. In addition, he was guided by a vision that only the Congress flag should fly in India, from north to south, and east to west. India could survive, he felt, if the Congress ruled in every state. Towards this end, he used his Youth Congress mercilessly.

Sanjay, however, was not destined to see his vision fulfilled. He died in an air crash on 23 June 1980. Farooq was going to see his father, when he received a call from Delhi

giving him the tragic news. He rushed to catch the first flight to Delhi.

When Farooq reached the airport, the ramp of the Indian Airlines aircraft was just being pulled away and the engines were already on. Dr. Karan Singh had just managed to board the plane, but Farooq had to wait for the next plane which left in an hour. One of the consequences of this was that some of the Congress partymen later spread a story about Farooq rejoicing over Sanjay's death.

When Farooq reached Delhi, he went to the Prime Minister's house at 1, Safdarjung Road. Sanjay's body was still at AIIMS and it was due to arrive any moment. When it did, Indira Gandhi was accompanying it. Farooq conveyed his and his father's condolences. Indira, who was inconsolable, told Farooq to ask his father to forgive Sanjay. With tears in her eyes, she said that a lot of bitterness had been created by many people.

Her son was cremated. Sheikh Abdullah came and offered his condolences.

What Sanjay's death should have taught Farooq was that no matter who was at the helm of things, Delhi could always be persuaded to make trouble for Srinagar. Once again the bitterness erupted. Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and his gang again started making trouble for Sheikh Abdullah, who was, in any case, not in good health. Mufti's actions were based on the hope that Indira Gandhi would dismiss the NC government and make him the Chief Minister.

In the third week of April 1981, the income tax authorities raided the premises of the prominent capitalists of Kashmir. The IT department was directly under the control of the Central Government. This seemingly innocuous action was, in fact, very serious as far as Sheikh Abdullah was concerned: some of the big capitalists of Kashmir were the biggest NC supporters and, in fact, their financiers. The Kashmir Chamber of Commerce called for a *bandh*, and not surprisingly, the NC

supported the *bandh*. Sheikh Abdullah went so far as to describe the raids as a “conspiracy” by the Centre.

The Centre did not stop there: a “Red Book” was circulated in the Valley, which contained a carefully drafted account of Sheikh Abdullah’s assets. It was believed to have come from Delhi. The final straw for Sheikh Abdullah was when he was told that tourists were being discouraged from going to Srinagar by, of all people, the Cabinet Secretariat’s Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India’s premier external intelligence agency.

When he became an MP, Farooq realised that people in the corridors of Parliament listened to, and believed more readily, the propaganda of the Delhi coterie, rather than attempting to understand the real grievances of the government at Srinagar. As an MP he felt he was getting nowhere. He decided that he would rather be NC President. Sheikh Abdullah had been occasionally dropping hints that he wanted to hand over organisational work to “the younger generation”, as he was getting too old to handle all of it. Sheikh Abdullah was talking of succession and openly trying to bring in his son. Many people resented this attempt to instal a dynasty in Kashmir.

The Politics of Succession

 On 23 January 1981, at the Hazratbal shrine, people who had congregated for the Id-e-Milad-ul-Nabi celebrations heard Sheikh Abdullah say that he was getting old, and that his health was giving way; that he could no longer carry on his responsibilities, and that the time had come when the people had to start looking for a younger man who could guide their destiny.

According to Farooq, people at Hazratbal responded by asking Abdullah why he should look far, when, according to them, the answer was so close. It was obvious they were referring to Farooq. "Farooq Farooq Farooq" they chanted. Sheikh Abdullah merely replied that it was the people's choice. And as simply as that, the choice of successor had been made.

His subsequent address packaged Farooq in the Sheikh's time-tested strategy of appealing to the very heart of

Kashmiriyat: he warned the crowds against vested interests which had betrayed them in 1953, and which would “once again enslave” Kashmiri Muslims; he told them that the 50-year-old movement “for securing a peaceful and honourable life” for Kashmiris should not be weakened. Thus he was leaving behind two legacies, he said: his son Farooq and the Hazratbal shrine.

Farooq, meanwhile, had been busy setting the stage for his accession to the throne. Travelling around the Valley, and speaking at fora provided by the NC’s youth wing, i.e., the Youth Federation (of which he was the patron), Farooq emotionally endeared himself to people in places where pro-Pakistan feelings were the strongest (in Sopore, for instance), by publicly demanding the reopening of the Rawalpindi Road (which links the Kashmir Valley with Pakistan), and demanding the repeal of all post-1953 laws.

Did the Abdullahs’ talk of autonomy and their anti-Centre stand come from Indira Gandhi’s various actions against Sheikh Abdullah, which, though pinpricks, verged on encroachment of his domain? Or was this the result of the need of the Abdullah family to smoothen succession, to ensure that Farooq did not have a rough journey towards the seat of power?

Both reasons could be valid, because as soon as Sheikh Abdullah dropped hints of bringing in the “younger generation”, sections of Kashmiri society began to speak out against dynastic succession. “UnIslamic, anti-secular and unethical,” Janata leader Abdul Rashid Kabli, termed it. He had started off with the militant Students’ and Youth League, and would later join Farooq and the NC, and be sent off to Delhi as an MP. He was not the only critic of Sheikh Abdullah’s plans: a “pamphlet war” broke out at the time, with many youth organisations distributing leaflets decrying “dynastic rule” that was being imposed by the Abdullahs.

Yet this need for the Abdullah family to retain power of the state in their possession, and the need to appeal to latent

pro-Pakistan feelings in order to smoothen the passing of the torch, helped to create an opening, however minuscule, in the mainstream political space of the Valley. This was the space that traditional pro-Pakistan formations began to use to squeeze themselves in.

So while the Youth Federation was busy demanding restoration of pre-1953 laws, the Jamaat-e-Talaba, the militant youth wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami, reiterated its demand for the "final solution" of the Kashmir dispute, and called for an Islamic state in J&K.

In this backdrop, Sheikh Abdullah's statements and its repercussions forced independent MP, Dr. Karan Singh, former state Governor and Abdullah-baiter, to urge the Prime Minister to take "serious cognisance of the provocative utterances" of Sheikh Abdullah. Dr. Karan Singh opined that whenever the state Chief Minister felt his position was threatened, he would resort to "his old game of arousing Kashmiri chauvinism... totally disregarding the detrimental effect it can have on the broader national interest".

Sheikh Abdullah recognised what was happening, and thus subsequently attempted to clarify that his was a demand for autonomy, and not secession; he pointed out that other states were also clamouring for more powers, and at the same time, declared that there was no place for J&K in Pakistan.

On 26 March 1981, Farooq was elected, unopposed, as the President of the National Conference. Ironically, he was garlanded at the function to celebrate the occasion by his brother-in-law Gul Mohammad Shah, Khalida's husband. Despite this public display of bonhomie, the tensions between the two were to erupt in no time. In less than a month, newspapers would be reporting on Shah's threats to resign from his father-in-law's ministry.

Shah was no doubt an old NC worker — he claimed to have joined the premier political organisation before 1947. He too had been arrested in 1953, and at this point, he, as

the Food and Civil Supplies Minister, felt that he had the support of the majority of the party's rank and file.

The way Shah was silenced after Farooq's ascent to power, however, was an eye-opener. An incident in which Shah was alleged to have assaulted two police officials led to a police strike in the Valley. A compromise was worked out in which an FIR (first information report) was lodged against Shah, but was not followed up; the strike was called off, and Shah had to simmer in silence for the time being.

Simultaneous to Farooq's ascent was that of Rajiv Gandhi's, the elder son of Indira Gandhi, who joined politics in 1981, not long after Sanjay's death. When in May that year, Rajiv's entry was formally announced, Farooq was one of the first ones to hail it.

Farooq's warm remarks on Rajiv's entry, and his desire to campaign for Rajiv, who was contesting from Sanjay's constituency Amethi (Farooq was unfortunately rebuffed by emerging Kashmiri Pandit power-broker and MP Arun Nehru), marked the beginning of Farooq's efforts to rebuild a bridge with Delhi. He suggested a meeting between his father and Indira Gandhi to end past misunderstandings.

Yet his plans did not seem to work. Congressmen at the Centre issued one vitriolic statement after another. Ghulam Nabi Azad, the MP who hailed from Doda district, accused Sheikh Abdullah of corruption and imposing family rule. Petroleum and Chemicals Minister, P.C. Sethi, accused him of sabotaging the 1975 accord. And Indira Gandhi herself ruled out any understanding with Sheikh Abdullah, saying that he was in the habit of backing out of his promises.

Despite such provocations, Sheikh Abdullah refused to join an Opposition front against Indira Gandhi. Individual entreaties came from Atal Behari Vajpayee of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the new incarnation of the Jan Sangh, from the West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, from the Lok Dal stalwart Biju Patnaik, and even from the Democratic Socialist Front leader H.N. Bahuguna. Perhaps the fear of being

dismissed made Sheikh Abdullah spurn the Opposition leaders. His old colleague, Mirza Beg told anyone who cared to listen that Sheikh Saheb would try to retain power at all costs, as "power (was) the be-all and end-all" for him.

This snubbing of the Opposition, however, had one very advantageous outcome for Sheikh Abdullah. Because of it he managed to get Mrs. Gandhi's support for his top priority (now that his end was near): the installation of Farooq as his successor. Though the procedure was almost complete, Sheikh Abdullah well realised that Indira Gandhi, on the prodding of the J&K Congress unit, could undermine it at any time if she wished. He knew this from past experience, because during his entire life, he had witnessed the ease with which New Delhi had been able to topple him and keep him alienated. When, in July 1981, Rajiv Gandhi visited Srinagar for a meeting of the All India Youth Congress, Farooq met him, and the ground was laid for a visit by Indira Gandhi to the Valley the following month. Mrs. Gandhi, who had ostensibly come to review the performance of the state government, was still very fond of Farooq, the youngster who had shown her around the Valley during her visit in 1977. His respectful and affectionate behaviour helped tip the scales in his favour.

To formalise matters, a party meeting was held, in which, as expected, Farooq's succession was confirmed. The only discordant note was struck by G.M. Shah, who was extremely critical of the move.

On 21 October 1981, Srinagar was witness to the extravaganza that marked Farooq's installation as NC chief. About five lakh people attended the celebrations. Farooq wore a *sherwani* and a cap — proper Islamic attire — and was showered with rose petals as his procession took four hours to travel from the party headquarters at Mujahid Manzil to Iqbal Park, winding through Zainakadal, Habbakadal, Maisuma, Budshah Chowk, Lal Chowk and Raja Bazaar. The procession was comprised of motorcyclists, horse riders,

chariots, and trucks. The route was decorated with the red flags of the NC. A sea of human heads shouted slogans in Kashmiri, such as "*Baban log Khan dress/Asi kaya kari Congress?*" (with father wearing the Pathan dress, what can the Congress do?).

From the balcony of the Lal Rukh Hotel, Sheikh Abdullah and his Begum proudly watched the spectacle. When Sheikh Abdullah addressed the people, he described the occasion as "historic" in the forty-two-year-old life of his party. As if to lend it further legitimacy, he compared it to the 1930 session of the Indian National Congress, in which Motilal Nehru had handed the mantle over to his son, Jawaharlal. In his ecstasy, Sheikh Abdullah refrained from a direct attack on the Congress, and instead warned the superpowers to keep their hands off the region and desist from making it their battlefield.

In his speech, Farooq threw caution to the winds, and articulated his deep desire to improve relations with New Delhi, and play the role he saw for himself as the bridge between the people of Kashmir and the rest of India: he suggested that the state unit of the Congress party be wound up.

By the time the celebrations ended, night had fallen, and the finale of the day was fireworks. The entire city was illuminated. It was truly a royal coronation.

Farooq's remark provoked the state Congress unit chief Mufti Mohammad Sayeed to dismiss it as "childish, absurd and ridiculous". Nonetheless, Farooq stuck to his ideals and continued to hold the view that the NC and the Congress had to work together for the good of the country. He even went to the extent of speaking about the ongoing ground work for the "affiliation or merger" of his organisation with the Congress.

At the same time, however, his father kept up the anti-Centre tirade, knowing fully well that the average Kashmiri Muslim would be suspicious of attempts to get any closer to Delhi. Less than a month after Farooq became party chief, Sheikh Saheb told his legislature that all the laws that had been enacted for J&K after 1953 would be repealed. Speaking on a Bill (sponsored by Abdul Ghani Lone of the People's Conference, but voted out at the introductory stage) for restoration of the offices of *Sadar-e-Riyasat* and Prime Minister of the state, Sheikh Abdullah said, as per the 1975 accord, his cabinet subcommittee had so far reviewed 400 laws and while some were in the interest of the state, others eroded the internal autonomy.

Sensing that his own end was near, Sheikh Abdullah continued talking in two voices, trying to appease the two different audiences he had in Srinagar and in Delhi. While one day he would state that "the decision by Kashmiris to link their fate with India in 1947 was in complete accord with Islam", a week later he would demand a return to the pre-1965 Congress-NC relationship, saying that the "necessity and feasibility" of the demand for greater autonomy would have to be admitted at one stage or another. But his true intentions became clear on 25 December 1981, when he put in cold storage his recommendations on shelving the post-1953 laws. He obviously wanted the merger of Kashmir with India to continue. He would never again administratively deal with the issue.

Sheikh Saheb, meanwhile, continued to keep indifferent health. Sensing that his end was near, the power-hungry members of the state unit of the Congress party, led by Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, itching to take over the reins, started exerting pressures upon their parent body to precipitate differences with Srinagar in an attempt to have the government dismissed. They were emboldened to do so, given the historical tradition of interference in Kashmir by Delhi. Whatever may have been the immediate provocation, Delhi

returned to its familiar pattern of kindling suspicion of the Kashmiri Muslim leadership, fuelled by the conspirators and cronies in the capital's corridors of power.

The first problem that highlighted this trend was the nominations for J&K's two seats in the Rajya Sabha. One seat was to be occupied by an NC candidate, and the other, as agreed upon by both Shiekh Abdullah and Indira Gandhi, would go to the Congress candidate. Farooq, the MP in Delhi, was the negotiator between Srinagar and Delhi, trying to do what he had always desired: to be the bridge between Kashmir and the rest of India.

Sheikh Abdullah wanted a Kashmiri in the second seat; somebody from the state, who was, at the same time, a member of the Congress party, and who would undoubtedly strengthen the bonds that were gradually building up between Srinagar and Delhi. He proposed the name of former Chief Minister, Mir Qasim, for the seat that was reserved for the Congress candidate.

Indira Gandhi, however, had never cared for such niceties. For her, the Rajya Sabha was a way of bringing into Parliament, and thus into government, those cronies who stood no chance of being popularly elected to high office. She thus wanted her former Home Minister, Om Mehta, to be the candidate for the second Rajya Sabha seat.

Farooq went to Delhi to sort the matter out with Indira Gandhi's confidant and Union Commerce Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, who was accompanied by junior Minister Margaret Alva. Mukherjee relayed Mrs. Gandhi's desire to allot a seat to Mehta, while Farooq stated his father's wishes in the matter.

Mukherjee went to see Indira Gandhi, and when Farooq next met the two ministers, he was told that the Prime Minister did not agree with Sheikh Abdullah's views. Farooq, still ready to cooperate and keep relations cordial, said that he was willing to offer the Congress party the second seat also, so long as Mir Qasim was given one of the seats, even

if it meant Om Mehta getting elected to the Rajya Sabha from J&K.

Indira Gandhi, however, was bitter with Mir Qasim, who she felt had let her down after the 1975 accord, when he went out of his way to accommodate Sheikh Abdullah without achieving the aim of concretely establishing the Congress party's base in the Valley. She rejected Farooq's offer.

He went back to Kashmir and related to his father what had transpired. Sheikh Abdullah, who had sensed his people's growing disillusionment with him and his accord, was less amenable to accommodation. He decided that the NC would nominate its people for both Rajya Sabha seats.

As a result, on 27 March 1982, Ghulam Rasool Mattoo, an NC candidate and a close relative of Sheikh Abdullah, was elected to one of the Rajya Sabha seats, while the other seat went to a journalist from Jammu whom the Congress supported, namely, D.C. Prashant, who beat his NC rival, Kashmir Singh.

For Farooq, these outcomes marked the start of bad blood between Srinagar and Delhi. Despite his best efforts to narrow the differences between the two sides, he found that there were "too many trouble-makers" and people spreading misinformation in Delhi. He recalls feeling that "no matter how much you wanted to straighten things out, it wasn't going to happen". He felt that the "wheels within wheels would continue to work" and that many in Delhi preferred false information to the honest views that prevailed.

Around the time of the Rajya Sabha elections, J&K experienced agitations in each of the three divisions of the state. In February, popular agitations took root in Kishtwar, a *tehsil* in district Doda of Jammu division, as well as in Ladakh division. Doda was a pathetically backward part of the state, and was known as the "&" in J & K for a variety of reasons: though administratively part of Jammu, it was geographically wedged between the topologically disparate regions of Kashmir and Jammu and had a mixed population of both

Muslims and Hindus, as well as Kashmiris and plains' people. Being so backward, one of its largest parts, Kishtwar, had long wanted the status of a separate district, so that its own development could be speeded up.

The Ladakhis, a minuscule part of the total population of the state, were a long neglected lot. Like many in Jammu, they had wanted closer integration with India. For starters, they felt that a step towards the improvement of their lot would be taken if the authorities granted the people, most of whom were of Tibetan stock, the status of a Scheduled Tribe. This would enable the people to take advantage of the various concessions granted by the government with regard to admissions in various educational institutions, jobs and financial help that were available to this weaker section of Indian society.

In March 1982, the hardline elements which had come into being following their opposition to the 1975 accord, launched an agitation in the Valley. It was an anti-liquor hartal, and it proved to be quite successful during the three weeks that it lasted.

Initiated by the People's League in Anantnag on 8 March, the hartal was joined by Mahaaz-e-Azaadi and the Jamaat-e-Islami when they saw how widespread the response was, particularly among the Muslims of Kashmir, who ensured a total *bandh*. The hartal had much to do with the growing influence of latent fundamentalist groups, emboldened by the recent example of Iran, where corruption was punished and where people led an enforced religious life. Anantnag, rechristened "Islamabad" by the hardliners, was a centre where the envy and anger of villagers and small towners were mobilised against the increasing inefficiency and corruption of Sheikh Abdullah's administration.

As a consequence, demonstrations and clashes with the police resulted in injuries to 65 persons within days, and the stir spread to the north Kashmir "apple town", Sopore, and then to the nerve centre of the Valley itself, Srinagar.

The situation occasioned a visit by Union Home Minister Zail Singh whose trip coincided with the Rajya Sabha elections. He conveyed to Sheikh Abdullah the Centre's concern with the growing activities of communal and extremist forces. The state administration responded by tightening security in an attempt to contain the situation; it made precautionary arrests of 50 People's League activists, including its President Mohammad Farooq Butt, on the charge of perpetrating secessionist activities.

The Chief Minister reacted emotionally: he accused Indira Gandhi of once again trying to destabilise his government. Even Farooq charged the Congress party with creating disruptions and planning disturbances in the state. For once, he too criticised the Congress — the Rajya Sabha nomination business had left a bitter taste in his mouth.

Under attack from many sides, Sheikh Abdullah decided to consolidate his position among his people by resorting to a measure that he was sure would have tremendous emotional appeal. He was unaware how much difficulty this same measure would later pose for his son, only days after his own death.

The Chief Minister decided to pilot the Jammu and Kashmir Grant of Permit for Resettlement in (or Permanent Return to) the State Bill — otherwise known as the Resettlement Bill — through the state legislature. The Bill was technically innocuous as it gave any person (especially people in "Azad Kashmir") who was a citizen of Kashmir before May 1954, or his descendant, the right to return, provided the person swore allegiance to the Constitutions of both India and Kashmir. In any case, nobody in "Azad Kashmir" or Pakistan was going to be allowed into India by the Ministry of Home Affairs if their credentials were the slightest bit suspect.

Politically, however, the Bill signalled to the people a future reunification of a people divided by the line of control; its deeper meaning indicated a return to the time when the state was undivided.

The Opposition boycotted the discussion. The Bill was passed in 20 minutes.

After passage by the Legislative Council, it was sent to Governor B.K. Nehru for his assent. Realising the misunderstanding it would cause between Srinagar and Delhi, even though he knew that it would be an utterly harmless law, he sagely chose to sit on it, instead of either returning it to the Assembly and forcing the issue, or giving his assent and creating an unnecessary controversy. It was subsequently forwarded to the Centre for "examination".

In the meantime, on 11 April, a gunman killed three Arabs at the Al-Asqa mosque in Jerusalem. The growing fundamentalist influence in the Valley reacted to this when news of it reached Kashmir three days later: protestors in Srinagar clashed, leading to one death and 200 people being injured. A hartal was organised in Anantnag, and when local NC legislator Abdul Salam Deva went there for a visit, a mob's ire was directed towards him.

Sheikh Abdullah, ill, distraught at his diminishing popularity, evidenced by the thinly attended rallies he now addressed, and distressed by the growing fundamentalism evident in the Valley, tried to snatch back the political initiative by raking up the Resettlement Bill. He accused its critics of being Hindu communalists, who were trying to convert J&K into a Hindu majority state. But before he could do much else, Sheikh Abdullah fell seriously ill during a trip to Doda on 8 June. He had gone for a meeting of the district development board, and he complained of abdominal pain and cardiac strain. He was advised bed rest.

When G.M. Shah received news of his father-in-law's illness, he made a public statement, demanding the resignation of Governor B.K. Nehru for not giving assent to the Resettlement Bill. Perhaps he calculated that with Sheikh Abdullah's end imminent, he could thus position himself

better than Farooq within the party, and more importantly, gain favour with the MLAs, so that if he could force the succession issue to an election of legislature party leader, he might win and emerge as the new Chief Minister.

All that this move served to do was harden Indira Gandhi's attitudes against him. She was already predisposed against G.M. Shah, thanks to the constant advice she received on NC matters from D.D. Thakur. Despite her irritation with Sheikh Abdullah and Farooq over the Rajya Sabha episode, she was now dead certain that G.M. Shah at the helm of affairs in J&K would not be in the interest of the Congress party, which she equated with national interest.

In any case, Shah was not a popular man, though he was an old worker of the party. He was not liked because of his temper, his rudeness, and his foul tongue. It was well known that he often physically abused the beautiful and intelligent Khalida, prompting many older Kashmiris to privately berate Sheikh Abdullah for having made a poor choice for his eldest daughter.

What perhaps cast the die was the mutual hatred between D.D. Thakur and G.M. Shah. The latter did not like Thakur because he had been brought in by Beg.

Farooq, however, could see how useful Thakur might prove. He knew that till he was safely ensconced as Chief Minister, G.M. Shah posed a potential threat. Thakur's desperate desire to figure in the power structure made him a useful tool. Farooq calculated that he could be cut to size later. He, however, continued to be distrusted as he was seen to be closer to Indira Gandhi than to Sheikh Abdullah. So Farooq enacted the role of a pliable and naïve youngster in need of tutorship. He played to Thakur's ego, and convinced him that it was only with Farooq that the former judge had any real political future. A natural alliance was formed.

Thakur, through Rajya Sabha MP, T.R. Amla, reinforced Indira Gandhi's impression that G.M. Shah was the wrong man to lead the people after Sheikh Abdullah's death. He was

just not pliable enough. She agreed that every effort must be made to bring in Farooq who was seen as being easier to mould. Thus, on 24 June Indira visited Srinagar, accompanied by her son Rajiv and his wife Sonia. Officially, she had come on a three-day holiday, but everyone knew she had come to play her role in the succession issue.

Indira directly told Sheikh Abdullah that it was time Farooq was brought into the government, so that if anything were to happen to him, continuity could be ensured. She emphasised the need to instal someone who would help to improve the relationship between Delhi and Srinagar.

The Chief Minister did not deign to reply.

Frustrated, Indira came out of the room, and bumped into Farooq.

"You know Farooq, it's strange," she said, "I talked to your father and said your succession would be for the betterment of the country, but he did not even reply. Would not say anything. It's a pity that he does not realise how important it is to have continuity in this state, the type which makes the nation more secure."

Farooq thanked her for her faith and trust, but could say nothing more.

What Indira Gandhi had come to do, however, she did. She refused requests by G.M. Shah for an appointment during her stay in Srinagar. She posed for widely published photographs of herself shaking hands with the bed-ridden Sheikh Abdullah, and for group photographs which included the Chief Minister, his wife, Farooq, Rajiv and Sonia.

Sheikh Adbullah made his feelings clear when he got well, by pledging his support to the Congress candidate for post of the President of the Union of India, former Home Minister Zail Singh. And at the Martyrs' Day rally at the martyrs' graveyard, he warned his son-in-law and the dissidents against disrupting the party. He told them that he was aware that the party faced a bigger danger from within than it did from outside. Farooq gave Shah an ultimatum just days before the

showdown, when he told a party rally at the NC headquarters at Mujahid Manzil, that elements trying to disrupt the party would be unceremoniously thrown out.

While all this was going on, there was a spurt in extremist activity in Kashmir. Sheikh Tajamul Islam, the President of the Jamaat-e-Tulaba, who had been arrested during the anti-liquor stir, made a speech at the Idgah, in which he asked India to take its "unholy hands" off and "vacate the soil of Kashmir". He declared his organisation would launch an Islamic revolution. He was promptly rearrested.

On the eve of Eid, 26 members of the Al Fatah organisation publicly resolved to work to "liberate Kashmir from Indian occupation". (Al Fatah had become famous in January 1971, when 300 of its workers were arrested, and its headquarters in Barsu, 20 kilometres from Srinagar, was busted.) A grenade was found in a mosque in Maisuma, a part of old Srinagar. In Sopore, a traditional Jamaat stronghold, Pakistan's Independence Day (14 August) was celebrated by a thousand Jamaat-e-Islami workers, who hoisted green flags and resolved to observe the following day, India's Independence Day, as a "black day". Not much attention seemed to have been paid to such activities.

What was a "black day" for the pro-Pakistan extremists turned out to be a day of showdown within the NC. Due to Sheikh Saheb's indisposition, Thakur as the Deputy Chief Minister was to preside over the state celebration of 15 August. Farooq, still an MP, was to attend the function at the Red Fort in New Delhi. But an urgent message from Kashmir prevented him from doing so, as it forced him to fly back rightaway. G.M. Shah and his supporters, including Agriculture Minister G.N. Kochak, Mohammad Ashraf Khan, party General Secretary Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah, MLA G.M. Butt, and junior ministers Hissamuddin Bande, Dilawar Mir and Ghulam Din Shah, had boycotted the official Independence Day celebrations.

Sheikh Abdullah was furious. "This much and no more," he thundered a day later, and soon G.M. Shah was sacked. The day after the son-in-law was thrown out, it was announced that the son would be inducted into the government as Health Minister. Later, *rapprochement* was sought, but Shah angrily said that he would return only on the condition that Thakur be dropped!

It turned out that Farooq had been inducted into the government in the nick of time. Three weeks later, on 5 September 1982, Sheikh Abdullah suffered a massive heart attack. Despite the best of aid, including imported medication from London, he died three days later, at the age of 78.

Farooq had gone to the Dastgir shrine at Khanyar in downtown Srinagar to offer special prayers. It was nearly 8 p.m. when he received the news and rushed to his father's bedside to see him breathe his last.

All activity in the Valley came to a halt as Kashmiri Muslims mourned the man who had, after centuries of foreign subjugation, given them a political identity and sought to protect their cultural identity in a strange and hostile world. His funeral procession from the Polo Grounds along Maulana Azad Road to Hazratbal was one of the largest ever seen in the Valley — a million mourners ensured its delay by five-and-a-half hours. All of Kashmir now looked to Farooq for guidance and leadership.

In the Driver's Seat

Two hours after his father's death, at 10 p.m., Farooq was sworn in as Chief Minister of J&K by Governor B.K. Nehru at the Raj Bhavan in Srinagar. Indira had already prepared the Governor for this eventuality.

The first decision that Farooq took was that his father's entire cabinet must go, so that he could select his own ministers, and ensure that G.M. Shah's people were completely sidelined. He talked to his mother, who, as patron of the NC, had to be consulted as far as party affairs were concerned. She was not very happy with his decision, and told Farooq that the people whom he wanted to marginalise would create a lot of difficulties for him.

In spite of his mother's reservations, Farooq stuck to his line of action. His first priority was to give a clean administration to the people, and this was to remain the rallying call for all his actions as the new Chief Minister.

In pursuance of his plan, he also went and saw Governor Nehru whom he considered more of a father-figure than a Governor. Farooq told Nehru that though he was totally inexperienced in running the administration, he personally felt that it would be very difficult to work with people who had lost the confidence of the people. "It's better that I make a clean break with the past", he told the Governor.

Nehru, like Begum Abdullah, felt it was not a wise decision. His advice, too, was very similar to that of Farooq's mother.

Farooq, however, euphoric with his new post, was not in a mood to be cowed down. He was insistent that he wanted to have around himself people he could work with rather than those he would be bossed and dominated by. In actuality, he was afraid of losing power to the likes of G.M. Shah and D.D. Thakur, were he to keep them around.

He dropped the bombshell on his ministers at the all-party condolence meeting that was held in Iqbal Park. A large number of people had assembled from all walks of life. The Governor and Dr. Karan Singh were present, as were all the ministers from Sheikh Abdullah's cabinet, who solemnly sat on the dais. The usual speeches were made, after which Farooq told the meeting that the time had come to make a break with the past.

Before his ministers fully realised the import of his words, Farooq added that if he dropped only certain ministers, it might be interpreted that they were incapable. Hence he had decided to change the entire cabinet.

The crowd was ecstatic. There was great excitement and "a meeting of sorrow became a meeting of happiness", according to Farooq. It was as if getting rid of these ministers was what the people had been looking forward to.

The ministers complained. After obliquely charging them with corruption they felt that Farooq should have called them to the dais to allow them to explain themselves. Now they feared that the people, believing the ministers to be corrupt,

would catch them and tear them apart. The Chief Minister then went over to where the Governor and Dr. Karan Singh were sitting. Karan Singh remarked that a major step had been taken. Farooq replied: "Well, let's see what happens!"

Soon after, Farooq announced his eleven-member ministry. D.D. Thakur's name did not figure in it, which was hardly surprising. Thakur had outlived his usefulness, and as intrigue is always a double-edged weapon, there was no chance that Farooq would ever feel totally comfortable with Thakur around. Needless to say, Thakur was not pleased.

People took Farooq's promise of providing a clean government seriously. He, too, seemed serious about pursuing it. In his maiden address to senior government officers at the secretariat, a few days after his swearing in, he used what was to become his trademark hyperbole. "I do not know the Supreme Court or high court," he loved to remark, adding, "corrupt officers will be hanged at Lal Chowk."

He had no time to pursue his agenda, however. Within ten days of his becoming Chief Minister, Governor Nehru returned to the Assembly the controversial Resettlement Bill, on which he had sat for such a long time. Before returning it, he called in the new Chief Minister and told him what he was about to do. Before he did so, he said, he wanted to know Farooq's thoughts on the matter.

Farooq was clear: this was his father's Assembly, and it had already passed the Bill once. If it was returned now, and if Farooq did not ensure its passage, which would have been his personal choice of action, it would mean political suicide for him as people would accuse him of selling himself out to Delhi, and acting against his own father's will. This was simply not possible for him to do. On the other hand if the Bill was passed again, then the Governor would have no choice but to sign it into law, as per the J&K Constitution.

The instructions from Delhi were clear, however, and the Governor's advice on letting the Bill gather dust somewhere was ignored. Indira Gandhi hoped that Farooq would scuttle

the Bill. Farooq felt that she had purposely put him on the spot, and its timing made its political message unmistakable: Farooq would have to toe Delhi's line from now on. Yet, for all the affection and admiration that Farooq personally felt for Indira Gandhi, and despite his overpowering desire to improve relations between Delhi and Srinagar, he could not commit political *hara-kiri*. So on 21 September 1982 the Bill re-entered the state legislature, and there was an uproar throughout the country. Even the Chief of Army Staff, General K.V. Krishna Rao (who would later return to the state as Governor and be another father-figure to Farooq) declared that the Bill would be detrimental to India's security.

A week later, both Farooq and his Governor were in Delhi, discussing the Bill with the Prime Minister. The Chief Minister pointed out that the Bill was, in reality, harmless, for anyone returning to J&K to claim land would first have to enter India, only after getting clearance from the Ministries of Home and External Affairs, which were unlikely to issue visas to people who would affect national security. He therefore could not figure out why Indira Gandhi was so reluctant about passing it.

It had already become a prestige issue, however, and the "coterie" convinced Mrs. Gandhi that a monstrosity had been created, which would result in tremendous upheavals. So she delegated the task of thrashing out a solution to her economic adviser L.K. Jha and Cabinet Minister Shiv Shankar. Farooq told them that under no circumstances would he scuttle the Bill, as he was not the Chief Minister for the sake of being Chief Minister, but that it was important for him to carry his people with him. He reiterated that he would not give way on the issue.

A compromise was reached. New Delhi would allow the Bill to be passed, and Farooq would refer it to the Supreme Court for an opinion, which would not be binding if the State ever had to use it, which was unlikely. In this way, the temperature that had been raised in the country would be

lowered. Everybody agreed to this solution, and on 5 October 1982, the Resettlement Bill was passed and, on a Presidential reference under the Constitution of India's Article 143, it was sent to the apex court.

No sooner was this over than Farooq impetuously went about "gunning" for D.D. Thakur. Although Thakur had not been included in the new council of ministers, as he may have been expecting, he could not have anticipated what Farooq would do next. He appointed a commission of inquiry, headed by Justice I.K. Kotwal, to look into the land deals at a residential colony in Anantnag, contracted by certain former ministers. Thakur immediately rushed to the Supreme Court and obtained a stay on the plea that Kotwal had been prejudiced against him in the past. What Farooq did to project his administration as one that would clean up the cesspool of corruption left behind by his father's ministry set the stage for turning former foes D.D. Thakur and G.M. Shah into allies against the Chief Minister.

On 14 November, Farooq went to Amritsar. Relations were still very good with Indira Gandhi, and he went to the Darbar Saheb at the Golden Temple to pay his respects and give his thanks for his recent elevation to the chief ministership of J&K. When he was leaving, he bumped into some Akali leaders: Master Tara Singh, Sant H.S. Longowal, Prakash Singh Badal, Surjit Singh Barnala, Gurcharan Singh Tohra and Balwant Singh.

They asked Farooq if he had come on behalf of the Prime Minister. He laughed and said: "No, I've come from Kashmir." He added that he had come because if Punjab burned, there was no way that Kashmir would survive, as they were part of the same process.

The Akalis told Farooq of the failure of their talks with Swaran Singh, the Centre's representative. They had recently been negotiating, and Swaran Singh, after consulting the cabinet subcommittee (comprising Pranab Mukherjee, R. Venkataraman, P.V. Narasimha Rao and P.C. Sethi), had

assured them that an agreement had been reached on their demands for the implementation of the Anandpur Sahib resolution (which dealt mainly with Centre-state relations), transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab, and a Supreme Court opinion on the sharing of river waters with Rajasthan and Haryana.

The draft agreement that was laid in Parliament, however, was different from what the Akalis and Swaran Singh had agreed to in their talks. While it had caused some ire, the Akalis told Farooq that they were still open to negotiation.

While they were talking, extremist leader, Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, sent a message to Farooq, asking the Chief Minister to meet him as well, since he was meeting the Akalis. Thus, after his four-hour conversation with the Akalis, Farooq climbed to the roof-top to meet Bhindranwale. His followers would not allow Farooq's security men to accompany him, and it was only after the Chief Minister said he would not proceed without them that his security detail was allowed to climb up with him.

Farooq saw a bare-footed man with a black beard, wearing a long black dress, talking in front of a video camera. Behind him sat 200 to 300 young men, armed with the latest weapons, which Farooq had never even seen before.

Bhindranwale took Farooq aside and told him of a meeting he had once had with Sheikh Abdullah. Bhindranwale had apparently told Farooq's father that, finally, Sikhs and Muslims would have to get together to fight the Hindus, who were pushing the minorities into a corner. He had told Sheikh Abdullah that unless they joined hands, they would not be able to rid themselves of this menace.

Farooq flatly told Bhindranwale that that was not what his father had taught him. In turn, he gave the Punjab extremist leader a lecture on unity and added that unless everyone worked together, there would be no prosperity. Bhindranwale switched to pure Punjabi, but his efforts to convince Farooq were in vain. In 15 minutes, the meeting

was over. A news photographer took their picture, and Farooq left.

The J&K Chief Minister went to the airport and flashed a message to the Prime Minister, requesting a meeting. She approved, and he went straight to Delhi, where he told her of his talks with the Akalis, and his impression that unless she ensured an honourable settlement with the moderate leaders, Bhindranwale would wipe them all out in the name of religion and the Panth. He told her what he felt would happen if the situation were not immediately brought under control.

Indira Gandhi asked Farooq's opinion on who should be put in charge of the negotiations. Farooq thought to himself that if he mentioned a political leader, then that person would attempt to get some political mileage of his own, and this might complicate things further. After some thought Farooq suggested that the services of Rajiv Gandhi be used to sort out this delicate matter.

Although Farooq and Rajiv had met many times before, and the two had many things in common — both were about the same age, both mainly spoke English (although Farooq was fluent in far more languages), both had foreign wives, and both came from political families — Rajiv had only recently entered politics, and had not really been groomed for the job.

Farooq's first impression of Rajiv as a political person had been formed earlier that year, just after he had become Chief Minister, and Rajiv had taken over as General Secretary of the Congress party. Farooq had visited 1, Safdarjung Road, one evening. The family had just finished dinner, and the Prime Minister had walked away from the dinner table in a huff. Farooq asked Rajiv and Sonia what the reason was, and they said that it was because they had been trying to persuade her to undertake a massive reshuffle of the cabinet.

Both had felt that the 60 ministers who were there at that point of time had no right to stay, because they were not

contributing to the betterment of either the country or the Prime Minister's image. They mentioned that they had quoted Farooq's example of having got rid of 23 ministers in one go. There were 800 MPs to choose from, they had told her, and she could certainly appoint new ones who had a better image.

Besides the flattering reference to himself, what impressed Farooq was the young couple's desire for a clean administration and the fact that they had had the guts to tell the Prime Minister to reshuffle the cabinet (a reshuffle took place eventually, but was widely seen as an inconsequential exercise).

The other trait that Farooq had admired about Rajiv was that he professed no particular religion, like his grandfather. He was neither Hindu nor Parsi; neither Sikh nor Muslim. He strongly felt that all religions must progress, though none at the cost of another, a belief which was particularly significant for a Kashmiri Muslim. He truly believed that he belonged to India, and that India belonged to him.

The sad fact that became obvious later in the decade was that Rajiv was never cut out for politics. Undoubtedly, Farooq was far more politically astute. In fact, Farooq's big political blunder would be to come down to Rajiv's level of political immaturity in 1986. Rajiv was a simple man, a man devoted to his job as a pilot, and to his family. Deeply fond of his children, he was essentially a family man, not a politician.

At that point in time, however, Farooq did suggest Rajiv's name to Mrs Gandhi. He pointed out that Rajiv had no axe to grind, and would be the best person to convey to the Prime Minister whatever transpired between him and the Akalis, without any additions or subtractions.

"Not a bad idea," Mrs. Gandhi told Farooq and, subsequently, she did send Rajiv along with Captain Amrinder Singh of Patiala to meet Bhindranwale at Ludhiana airport, and hold a discussion with him, aimed at bringing the temperature down. But before their plane even landed, they

were called back. Mrs. Gandhi's cronies had apparently convinced her with the argument that she had already lost one son, and should not risk losing another. The problem basically stemmed from the differences that the two leaders — Home Minister Giani Zail Singh and Punjab Chief Minister Darbara Singh — had on the situation (even though both were Indira loyalists). At another point of time, Rajiv and Amrinder were to leave from Safdarjung airport, but were again called back even before they took off.

The day after Farooq met Indira Gandhi, however, the newspapers splashed the photographs of him with Bhindranwale, and quoted the J&K Chief Minister as saying that the NC and the Akalis would wage a common battle to get justice from the Centre. The newspapers also reported him as saying that Delhi should do everything possible to remove the genuine grievances of the Akalis. The sentiments must have come quite naturally to Farooq, for he and his father had the same view on Centre-state relations. This development, however, displeased Mrs. Gandhi so much, that three days later, Farooq had to issue a statement saying that he would no more talk to the Akalis, and advised them to come to the negotiating table. This became another of the growing sore points between Indira Gandhi and Farooq Abdullah.

Farooq's mother and sister were also making his life miserable: by forcing him to patch up with his brother-in-law. He and G.M. Shah met on 24 November to discuss the coming Assembly elections, and Shah made his price for support clear: none of his supporters was to be denied tickets.

That Farooq was keen to have elections was no secret. If he had his own way, they would have been held in the freezing winter itself. But they were not, and the time period in between threw up more difficulties between the Chief Minister and the Prime Minister.

The first was the problem of funds: Farooq was not getting any, and he felt that he was being denied them because he

was not a Congressman. He told a Citizens' Advisory Council meeting in Srinagar in January 1983 that though he did not want a confrontation with the Centre, J&K could not continue as a part of India unless additional funds, power, and essential commodities were sanctioned to it. The next month, he would tell Bombay industrialists that he would soon have no choice but to finance his dream Rs. 313 crore, 480 megawatt Uri power project with Arab money.

Things got worse as time passed. Farooq and his officials once visited Delhi to discuss the Jawaharlal Mountaineering Institute, India's third mountaineering institute, which was to be built in Pahalgam. The Government of India had proposed the project, and Farooq went to meet the Prime Minister, the Defence Secretary and other ministers in South Block's cabinet room. A presentation was made by Farooq's officials, showing the state's plans to widen the road to Aroo and the construction of facilities leading up to the institute. The J&K Government claimed that to build the requisite infrastructure for this Defence Ministry project, it would need Rs.19 lakh.

Indira Gandhi replied that the government did not have Rs. 19 lakhs. Farooq rose from the table, closed his file and thanked the Prime Minister for her time. "Despite being a poor state, J&K had sent these officials and ministers by air, only to be told that the mighty Government of India does not have Rs.19 lakhs", he said, motioning to his officials to leave.

The Prime Minister was furious. She told Farooq to sit down, which he did, though he also added, that they did not want an institute. Indira had to calm herself, and finally she asked the Defence Secretary to arrange for the money needed. It was done, and Farooq and his team left. The bitterness caused, however, was unmistakable.

Next came the visit of the Planning Commission's team, which approved a certain sum for the state, but when the J&K state government officials went to Delhi to finalise the figures, they found the sum had been slashed. S.B. Chavan (Farooq had once met him when he was the Maharashtra Chief

Minister) was in charge of the Planning Commission, and was acting on Indira's instructions not to give the state a paisa more. After much pleading on the part of Farooq and his officials, Chavan sanctioned another five crore rupees, as if he were doing the state a great favour.

With this background in mind, it was very easy for the National Conference to interpret the January 1983 Assembly election results in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tripura, where the Congress was swept out of power, as a clear verdict for greater autonomy for the states. Farooq hailed the Congress defeats and described them as "the beginning of the shrinking of the Congress ocean", while "rivers had started expanding". It was his opinion that regional parties were obviously more effective in identifying themselves with the aspirations of their respective peoples.

Despite Farooq's provocations, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and the rest of the state Congress outfit knew which way the wind was blowing, and that they would never make any inroads into the state without the help of Farooq. They well realised that trying to propagate the Congress cause in the Valley was akin to trying to plant a flower in the desert.

The suggestion that their parties form an alliance for the coming J&K Assembly elections came directly from Indira Gandhi. RAW chief, K. Shankaran Nair, was sent to Jammu to see Farooq, and they met over breakfast. Nair told Farooq that the Congress wanted four to eight seats in the Valley, out of a total of 42. Farooq said that was impossible. Nair then suggested that Farooq go to Delhi and talk to Mrs. Gandhi.

In Delhi, Farooq discussed the matter with Rajiv Gandhi and K.C. Pant. Despite rumours that Farooq kept the two men waiting while he gallivanted around the capital, they did meet, and Farooq told them, in no uncertain terms, that it would be impossible to give them anything, for the people would then accuse him of selling them out. The most he could do was to put up weak candidates at one or two places, and if the Congress candidates were strong enough to win, they

could win a seat or two. But giving seats in any other way would not be possible. Farooq's utterances gave Delhi the impression that he was unwilling to play ball, he was non-serious, and worse, that he was unreliable.

The trouble was that Farooq did nothing to allay these suspicions. On his return from a trip to Venezuela in March 1983, Farooq met Pakistan President Zia-ul Haq, who was in Delhi for the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit. He told journalists later that he was very impressed with Zia; that he was a very handsome man contrary to his appearance on television. Zia had apparently told Farooq that he could visit Pakistan even without a visa, which prompted a Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs, K. Natwar Singh, who was hanging around, to say that were Farooq to act on Zia's offer, he would be declared an alien and not permitted to return to India.

Zia made a statement on Kashmir reminding India that his country considered the Valley as disputed. Farooq claimed that this statement was intended only for the consumption of the people of Pakistan. This, he confessed, was something that politicians were apt to do. "Mrs. Gandhi does it, I do it, and now General Zia has done it," he said.

Finally, the elections were announced — they were to be held in June 1983. Khalida prevailed upon Begum Abdullah to persuade Farooq to give tickets to some of those people he had thrown out; for instance, Hisamuddin Bande. Farooq was against the idea. Khalida argued, however, that Bande lived on the outskirts of the Hazratbal shrine, that he was one of the caretakers of the holy relic, and that, in a way, he represented the shrine. She felt that it would be an injustice to deny him the ticket.

Farooq knew in his heart of hearts that he should not succumb to the pressure, but he finally felt he was left with no choice. He would bitterly regret his capitulation to his mother and sister a year later, when all those people whom they had insisted he retain, would contrive to topple him. The

move disappointed other people too, amongst whom were a huge number of Farooq's supporters, who did not find themselves with tickets for the elections.

One of Farooq's major achievements in the run-up to the elections was to make friends with Mirwaiz Moulvi Farooq, the man he had promoted during the 1963 Hazratbal crisis, and who had solid support in pockets of downtown Srinagar. At a public meeting at Iqbal Park on 20 May, Mirwaiz Farooq bade farewell to the 50-year-old "*sher-bakhra*" rivalry, and announced his total support to Farooq and the NC.

Slogans such as "*Sher-bakhra bhai bhai, Indira kahan so aiyi*" (the lion and the goat are brothers, where does Indira come in) and "*Double Farooq Zindabad*" rent the air as Mirwaiz Farooq told the crowd that the Congress should not be allowed to become a force in the Valley as it had destroyed the identity of Kashmiri Muslims. He renewed the demand for the right to self-determination.

Mirwaiz's demand, in retrospect, was nothing more than a poll stunt. For, as newspapers pointed out at the time, the separatist lobby in Kashmir had been isolated. Despite a boycott by the Mahaaz-e-Azaadi, the People's League and the Jamaat-e-Tulaba, the Jamaat-e-Islami (which had yet to recover from the drubbing it received following the execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1979) was participating and the Awami Action Committee was supporting the NC. The secessionists' influence had waned following the free and fair polls of 1977, and, in the current campaign, people noticed the mass participation in electioneering, notably in the rural areas. The secessionist boycott call evoked no response unlike in the past.

Indira, however, who was campaigning in Jammu that day heard what Farooq had said and was provoked into communalising the elections, starting a trend that has continued since. Her party went to every village with the Resettlement Bill, called Bill number nine, and told Hindu voters that the Bill would be detrimental to their interests, that

Pakistanis would come and occupy the land in Jammu, and that the Hindus would be thrown out of their houses and onto the streets because Farooq Abdullah had passed that Bill. The people were told that the only party that could save them from this fate was the Congress.

Columnist Kuldip Nayar bumped into Farooq at the Jammu airport, and told the Chief Minister that Jammu was totally pro-Congress. He mentioned rumours of Army *jawans* going to villages and stopping at water-wells, where people congregated, to talk to them and disseminate their views about Bill number nine.

In the heat of the moment, Farooq said he wasn't bothered about Jammu and would seek its separation if it rejected him in the polls. Like a true Kashmiri, Farooq spoke emotionally at first, and cooled down later, but the damage had been done, because Nayar published what Farooq had said. This statement caused tremendous resentment in Jammu, as expected.

During the last leg of the campaign, Indira visited the Valley, and found her tactics had boomeranged. The people were angry with her party. She, in turn, became angry and her local partymen stoked the fires of her wrath by telling her stories, mostly fabricated, of how Farooq was sabotaging her campaign: that the NC had burnt the party office on Maulana Azad Road, when the actual culprit was Mohammad Shafi Qureshi; that Farooq had stopped all buses from plying on the day of her rally at Iqbal Park; and that he had ordered some youngsters to stand on top of a bus and show off their manhood during the same meeting.

Indira was infuriated, especially after hearing about the obscene gestures (though nobody admitted to having actually seen them), and when Farooq tried to meet her later at Raj Bhavan, Governor B.K. Nehru stopped him, saying she did not want to meet him. Farooq shrugged his shoulders.

In those days, Farooq seemed to make one mistake after another. During the campaign, he went to Vijayawada, in

Andhra Pradesh, to attend a conclave of Opposition leaders. At that point he went to the fourteen-party meet to complain of the electoral malpractices he felt the Centre was trying to perpetrate. Sharing the stage with, among others, Jyoti Basu, N.T. Rama Rao, Ramakrishna Hegde and M.G. Ramachandran, the Chief Ministers of West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, respectively, he stated that the Election Commission should be an autonomous body. According to Farooq, the Congress was trying to manipulate election officers and the electronic media, and the man coordinating all these activities in Srinagar was Congressman Arif Mohammad Khan.

Whatever may have been decided at the conclave, Farooq had done a great service to the nation, because, for the first time, Kashmiris were made to feel that they were part of the national mainstream and for once they took an interest in the national agenda.

Indira was not interested in national integration. She was furious that Farooq had thumbed his nose at her and hopped on to the Opposition bandwagon. To add insult to injury, Farooq was re-elected Chief Minister, sweeping the Valley, while the Congress was victorious only in Jammu. Newspapers described the victory as David's triumph over Goliath. And yet, Farooq was once again keen on making a new beginning. But state Congress strongman Iftekar Hussain Ansari's links with Arun Nehru, and Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's links with M.L. Fotedar, would see to it that an impenetrable wall remained between Farooq and Indira.

Farooq's first spell of administration was euphoric. The massive victory, and the general enthusiasm of the people, infected the government. Feeling that it had the full backing of the people, the government went ahead and undertook a number of new ventures for development of the state. The general mood of buoyancy was very infectious.

As a Chief Minister, bureaucrats have described Farooq as a good man-manager and motivator. Though decisive, he

was apt to turn fickle and changed his mind, depending on whom he had last listened to. His restlessness was criticised by some, who insisted that it was indicative of a lack of concentration on serious matters. Others, however, praised Farooq and pointed to his deep knowledge of the state. Even today, Farooq Abdullah remains the man best informed about Kashmir, thanks to his network of contacts, which includes political people.

As an administrator, Farooq was a man in a hurry and did not appreciate bureaucratic delays. Although he was criticised for not being able to sit and study files, it may be pointed out that very few politicians do. He was very much like Bihar Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav, a man with tremendous knowledge of his state, yet one who does not have the patience to peruse files.

As a result, Farooq needed effective bureaucrats around him, and during his first tenure, he had a good Principal Secretary, Mehmood-ur Rehman. Rehman had been the Agriculture Secretary during Sheikh Abdullah's chief ministership, when Farooq first met him, and they got to know each other because of the "Haji Mastan of Kashmir", namely, Mohammad Iqbal "Dithene".

Iqbal "Dithene" was a revenue accountant who miraculously became Collector of Revenue after only seven years of service. He was a friend of Transport Minister G.M. Shah, who was in cahoots with Agriculture Minister, G.M. Kochak. At the time there was a huge subsidy on pesticides, and the brand used in the apple orchards was called "Dithene M-45". It was distributed by Iqbal "Dithene".

Rehman mentioned to Farooq that every man in the administration had been corrupted by Iqbal "Dithene". An inquiry was held and, though it was scuttled, Farooq came away with the impression that Rehman was a man who was upright and incorruptible. And so when the time came to appoint a Principal Secretary, Farooq felt that Rehman would be the perfect man to advise him without fear or favour.

Farooq's Chief Secretaries, however, were not as commendable. The first one was Noor Mohammad, who, though very senior, had a very narrow perspective. Interested in his own political games, he did not see eye-to-eye with the Chief Minister, but Farooq had to tolerate him till his retirement.

Then came Mir Nasrullah. He was an extremely weak man, and Farooq was not particularly impressed with him. Farooq's friend, a bureaucrat named Ashok Jaitly, persuaded him to take Nasrullah on, since he was the seniormost official in the state, and more importantly, he was a Kashmiri Muslim.

Ironically, Mir Nasrullah used to be Farooq's chemistry teacher in college — a subject in which Farooq failed. He also used to be in charge of the J&K Cadet Corps camp in which Farooq was taking part when Sheikh Abdullah was arrested in 1953. Nasrullah had then married Bakshi's daughter, and soon after, become an IAS officer.

One day, while he was still teaching chemistry, Nasrullah met Farooq on the street just opposite the J&K Prime Minister's residence, and asked him if the rumours he had heard were true, i.e., that Farooq had been talking ill of Nasrullah's father-in-law. Farooq was hurt to see the level his teacher had been reduced to. He told Nasrullah that he had known Bakshi longer than Nasrullah had, and his criticism of Bakshi stood. He was not afraid of Nasrullah, who, in any case, could not go around challenging people like that.

Right then, Farooq lost respect for Nasrullah, and so when he was being persuaded to take him on as Chief Secretary, he was reluctant. They, nonetheless, met in Kashmir House in New Delhi, where Farooq directly told Nasrullah that he recollected that Sheikh Abdullah had moved him out of the state in 1975 because he could not trust him. Farooq promised to bring him back on the condition that he would not play games any more. Nasrullah was appointed Chief Secretary.

When Farooq was later dismissed, however, Nasrullah came and apologised to him. Farooq said he did not hold

Nasrullah responsible for anything, even though he should have informed his Chief Minister, who was also the state's Home Minister, of certain arrangements prior to the dismissal, such as the landing of outside forces in the state about which Nasrullah knew. Privately, Farooq felt that Nasrullah had a hand in his dismissal; that even if he did not do it directly, he had acquiesced in the plans.

Farooq, however, also had good, reliable people working with him. Rehman took care of all the routine file work leaving the Chief Minister to do the serious decision making. Finance Commissioner Sushma Choudhary was another bureaucrat for whom Farooq had high regard.

One bureaucrat even became a close friend of Farooq's. When Farooq returned from England, his friends told him of an incorruptible Industries Secretary named Ashok Jaitly. Although he was too junior to be the Chief Secretary in the early 1980s, he was appointed as Planning Commissioner, a vital post in the state.

Whatever his strengths and weaknesses, Farooq did not last long enough to chalk up any major achievements. There was a lot to be done, but many of his plans would not get clearance from Delhi. The power projects were one such example. When the Eighth Finance Commission went to J&K to discuss the state's budgetary requirements, Farooq lost his temper and remarked that if Delhi continued to see things from a narrow perspective, the fallout would be disastrous.

As a result, Farooq once again took up the cause of Centre-state relations, but his undisguised resentment of the treatment the state was receiving put him on the warpath with Delhi. Particularly galling to the Centre was Farooq's decision to host a conclave of India's Opposition leaders in Srinagar.

It was 5 October 1983, and on the platform at Iqbal Park in Hazuri Bagh stood India's Opposition leaders making speeches about Centre-state relations. A Kashmiri youngster

in the audience, who later found a job as a journalist, remembers standing and listening to the speeches by N.T. Rama Rao, then Ashok Mitra, followed by a host of other speakers.

Suddenly, somebody on the stage shouted "*Bharat Mata ki...*" And immediately the response was: "*Jai!*"

People like that youngster were stunned. It was the first time they had ever heard a pro-India slogan in the Valley. There had always been a small but distinct secessionist voice in those areas, as had been witnessed several weeks back, when the Jamaat-e-Tulaba, the JKLF and the People's League tried to disrupt the Independence Day functions. This element, however, was too small to be a factor at the time. The majority of people were perhaps ambivalent towards India, having accepted that they had to live with the country, and looking for the best deal they could get out of it.

So it was no mean accomplishment when the Opposition leaders for the first time got Kashmiri Muslims to enter the national mainstream. For the first time, Kashmiri Muslims, through their leader Farooq Abdullah, felt they were helping to set the national agenda, by calling for a greater devolution of power. For the first time, they felt that they were playing an active role in shaping the Republic.

So, at the Opposition conclave on Centre-state relations, organised by Farooq Abdullah, stalwarts such as Jyoti Basu, N.T. Rama Rao, Jagjivan Ram, Surjit Singh Barnala, Biju Patnaik, and Chandra Shekhar, among many others, spoke on various issues and endorsed the "Srinagar Declaration", a document which listed their suggestions on the role of Governors, the allocation of resources by the Centre, the role of the Finance Commission, the functioning and composition of the Planning Commission, the appointment and transfer of judges, and the role of All India Radio and Doordarshan (TV).

These points struck a chord with the people, and particularly with their Chief Minister, who had already run into a confrontation with the Centre on each of these issues,

with the exception of the role of Governors. He had lambasted the workings of the electronic media during the Assembly elections, and even on the appointment of judges he had had a run-in with the Centre, when the acting Chief Justice of the J&K High Court, Justice Bahauddin Farooqi, was shifted to the Sikkim High Court as Chief Justice, instead of being regularised in the J&K High Court as had been expected.

It turned out that behind the transfer was the hand of an old foe of Justice Farooqi, D.D. Thakur, who was in the process of making common cause with Farooq's disgruntled brother-in-law, G.M. Shah, as well as building bridges with Indira Gandhi. The personal rivalry between Thakur and Farooqi was a legacy from their days in the judiciary, and Thakur told Farooqi that the Congress wanted him to strike down the state's anti-defection law, which would make Farooq's toppling easier. Farooqi refused, and he was shifted.

Like any good Kashmiri, Farooqi did not want to leave the Valley, and that too, for a distant-sounding place like Sikkim, where he might be a "fish in the desert"; so he opted for early retirement. Farooq took the issue up with the Centre, saying that the Chief Justice the Centre appointed for J&K, Vaizhakkulangrayll Khalid, was not familiar with the local customs and traditions, and besides, had only eleven months of service remaining.

New Delhi, however, dug in its heels on the matter, and Farooq had to drop his case for he did not want to be seen as being unnecessarily confrontational. On the other hand, he did want to placate Farooqi by making him his Law Minister, but the traditional rivalry between Farooqi's father-in-law, Hamiduddin Mattoo, and Sheikh Abdullah (Mattoo was a staunch critic), was enough to make Begum Abdullah ensure that Farooqi did not figure anywhere in Farooq's government.

It was over the issue of the appointment of the Chief Justice that G.M. Shah decided to break his silence, and he came out publicly to attack the Chief Minister. Till now he

had maintained a semblance of discretion in his anti-Farooq activities, whether it was hobnobbing with the Congress or refusing to campaign for party candidates during the June elections. Farooq retaliated by sacking Shah and his supporters, who set up their own National Conference, the NC(K), named after Khalida. Farooq's party was known as the Asli NC (the real National Conference).

Luck was not with Farooq, however, for soon after the Opposition conclave and the split in the party, a cricket match between the West Indies and India, played in Srinagar, became another cause for an attack on Farooq. During the match, some people in the crowd shouted anti-India slogans, raised green flags of the Jamaat-e-Tulaba and shouted pro-Afghanistan slogans [in support of the Mujahideen fighting a *jihad* (holy war) against the Soviet Union]. One of the hooligans was believed to be Shabir Ahmed Shah, and the police finally caught up with him after a four-month search following the match.

According to Farooq, Mrs. Gandhi had been extremely annoyed after his holding of the Opposition conclave, because she thought it was being held to ensure her defeat in the coming general elections. Though probably true, it was no reason to dismiss a state government. If Farooq told his people that the aim of the conclave was to project what twenty-first century India should be; that the federal structure should be truly federal, then he was not wrong. In a broader perspective, Congress politics had brought things to this pass.

The cricket match gave Delhi the chance to accuse Farooq of being guilty of harbouring anti-national elements in his state. Indira Gandhi, at a press conference in Patna on 4 January 1984, said that she would not allow the continuance of anti-national activities in J&K. It was obvious that she was seeking to throw Farooq out of power. Farooq angrily reacted a week later, saying that the problem was not one of law and order, but of politics, of J&K being a Muslim majority state: "Our credentials as nationalists are always suspect."

The Odd Trio: Mhatre, Butt and Jagmohan

While Indira was tightening the proverbial noose around Farooq's neck, an Indian diplomat was murdered by Kashmiri extremists in Britain. While the political killing may have been only one of the occasional acts undertaken by secessionists to keep the pot boiling, it made the dismissal of Farooq's government soon after an ill-timed (and, in any case, ill-conceived) action by New Delhi.

According to G.C. Saxena, former J&K Governor, while Pakistan had cooled down after the 1971 war, it continued to keep the Kashmir issue alive during the 1970s without doing very much about it, other than instigating certain incidents at regular intervals: the hijacking of an aircraft by Hashim Qureshi to Lahore in 1971; Mohammad Maqbool Butt, a fugitive, caught robbing a bank in 1976; and then the

murder of India's Assistant High Commissioner, Ravindra Mhatre, in Birmingham.

Be that as it may, Mhatre's murder and the retaliatory execution of Maqbool Butt created overnight "outlaw legends" for the youth of Kashmir, who at that point knew nothing much about the destructive consequences of the cult of violence. Maqbool Butt has since become part of Kashmiri folklore.

At the same time, the dismissal of a duly elected government (which had come to power in only the second fair elections in J&K), signified to many Kashmiris that even if they were to reconcile themselves to never having the quantum of autonomy they had enjoyed in the 1948-1952 period again, even within the subsequent "limited" democracy, India would not let them have their way. No matter how much they wanted to remain in the political mainstream, India would not let them, at least not while the expression of the Kashmiri Muslim identity remained supreme in the state.

The juxtaposition of romanticised alternative political activity, with the denial of allowing the Kashmiri Muslim identity to express itself politically marked a turning point in the larger political developments, and was a major factor in the consequences that evolved during the decade.

On 3 February 1984, India's Assistant High Commissioner to UK, 48-year-old Ravindra Hareshwar Mhatre, was leaving his office in Birmingham at 5 p.m., when he was kidnapped by the Kashmir Liberation Army (KLA), a breakaway faction of the JKLF. The KLA, speaking through Zubair Ansari, the JKLF General Secretary, demanded the release of Mohammad Maqbool Butt in return for Mhatre's release.

Butt was a 50-year-old, who originally came from Trehgam village in Kupwara. At some point, Butt, an MA in English literature, had gone to Pakistan and settled down in Peshawar. In Pakistan, he founded the Jammu & Kashmir National Liberation Front along with Amanullah Khan, who

subsequently went off to the UK and headed the JKLF. Butt had based himself in Rawalpindi, and called himself the head of the JKNLF.

In Kashmir, Butt was awarded the death sentence on 17 August 1968, for the murder of CID officer Amar Chand at Nadihal in Baramulla. In December that year, he escaped from Srinagar Central Jail, and crossed the border. Reports said that he jubilantly received Hashim Qureshi at the Lahore airport after the latter had hijacked an Indian Airlines plane in 1971.

Butt was rearrested in 1976, when he was trying to rob a bank. A few months later, six Kashmiri youths of the JKLF, led by Abdul Hamid Diwani of Bandipora, hijacked another plane, this time to demand his release. As time went on, Butt's case climbed higher through the Indian legal process, with the award of capital punishment being confirmed and reconfirmed.

In the meantime, there were calls for the revocation of the death penalty. But while the JKLF, on 2 February 1981, threatened the government with "dire consequences" if the sentence were not revoked, on 10 July the same year, the Srinagar Bar Association appealed to both the President and the Prime Minister to commute the death sentence.

But when Mhatre's body, riddled with gunshot wounds, was found two days after his abduction, in a driveway leading to a remote 100-acre farm in a Leicestershire village (about 50 km from Birmingham), it took Thakur Pavitar Singh Bhardwaj, the special judge under the "Enemy Agents Ordinance" less than three days to sign the black warrant for Butt's hanging, scheduling it for 11 February.

Instantly, there were hartals and demonstrations in Kashmir, where Butt was described as "a shining example of sacrifice and dedication for the cause of the Kashmiri people". A.G. Lone questioned why young and educated men in West Bengal, alleged to be responsible for more than 10 murders each during the Naxalite movement, were granted clemency

while Butt, an "equally high class young man, an intellectual and a political activist", was shown no such mercy. The pleas and arguments made no difference. Butt was hanged.

In London, Hashim Qureshi, who had arrived in Britain two weeks before Mhatre's murder and was briefly detained by Scotland Yard, was shown on British television, promising to avenge the hanging. Some suspects fled to Pakistan; a hunt was launched for others in Denmark and Holland. Eventually, five people were arrested for Mhatre's murder, all of whom were emigrants from Mirpur, and members of the JKLF.

Mirpur must have struck a chord with someone in the state Congress unit, for Mufti's men got hold of some photographs of Farooq at the JKLF convention in Mirpur, ten years earlier. There he stood, on the podium with Amanullah, wearing a garland on which a badge of the (J)KLF was pinned. Also reproduced was an interview Farooq had given to an "Azad Kashmir" newspaper, *Anjaam*, during his visit to Saudi Arabia in January 1982, in which he had allegedly said that the liberation front was a nationalist organisation, and that the detention of Butt "betrayed the Centre's mistrust of state leadership".

It became a very convenient stick for Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv to beat Farooq with. The Chief Minister had to deny his links with the JKLF, and also had to deny that he had given any interviews in Saudi Arabia (he had only informally met some journalists). Yet, for Delhi, it was reason enough to go ahead with the plan of dismissing Farooq.

Many Congressmen had also been demanding a change of Governor, because B.K. Nehru would not always do Delhi's bidding. This irritated and worried Indira Gandhi. She called Nehru to Delhi a number of times, and asked him to dismiss Farooq. He refused to give in, saying that J&K was a peaceful state, and that doing anything foolish would set it alight, after which it would be very difficult to bring it back to normalcy.

Indira Gandhi consulted her advisers P. N. Haksar, L.K. Jha and G. Parthasarathy, and all of them told her that the

dismissal would not be correct. They advised her to talk to Farooq; the Chief Minister was called to Delhi, and he met Parthasarathy.

Farooq reiterated that he had no intention of pulling Mrs. Gandhi's government down, but he wanted the freedom to function in the way he chose. Matters were sorted out for the moment and B.K. Nehru advised his Chief Minister to stay away from Opposition meets. The root causes of the tensions, however, remained, and it would not be long before Farooq again gave vent to his anger at meetings of the National Development Council or at the meeting of Chief Ministers to implement the Centre's 20-point programme.

B.K. Nehru had also alerted Farooq to the activities of G.M. Shah, who was now openly trying to buy Farooq's MLAs. Even Iftekar Ansari, one of the main architects of the plan to topple Farooq, gave one of his bureaucrats a warning but Farooq figured that the Centre would not do anything unconstitutional, and if it did, he would merely go to the people and come back stronger than ever.

Farooq acted rashly. He called for a vote of confidence in the Assembly, despite the Governor's advice to the contrary, just to see how various MLAs would react, and to check out who was actually on his side. Governor Nehru was annoyed, and sent him a letter, saying that if his dismissal was demanded, he could constitutionally go ahead and sack him. Yet he did not do so.

One day, in his chambers in the Assembly, Farooq received a phone call from Union Home Minister P.C. Sethi, whom he has described as "a peon of 1, Safdarjung Road". Sethi told Farooq that Jagmohan would be coming in as the state Governor. Farooq was surprised that the state government had not been consulted, as per traditions, and said so. Sethi told him that the Centre had already taken its decision. Farooq was peeved: "If you've already taken a decision, then why are you telling me?" he snapped.

Farooq went to Raj Bhavan, and met Governor Nehru, who seemed to know that a change was on the way. Farooq was amazed that the Governor had never uttered a word about it. Farooq asked B.K. Nehru what he knew about the new man. Nehru replied that he hardly knew him, but he had heard that Jagmohan was very close to Indira Gandhi and had been Sanjay's man. A short while later, when B.K. Nehru was leaving 1, Safdarjung Road, he bumped into a man walking in, who said, "Hello, I'm Jagmohan". Nehru bluntly asked him when was he planning to dismiss Farooq? Jagmohan vehemently denied that any such thing was on the cards.

It was, however, clear to B.K. Nehru that since he had refused to play ball, he had been moved. Initially, he did not want to take up his new posting at Gujarat, preferring to resign immediately. His many friends, however, persuaded him that any such move at this stage would further destabilise the Central Government, and Indira Gandhi's chances of winning the coming general elections would worsen. He, therefore, reluctantly agreed to go to Gujarat for the time being.

Jagmohan came prepared with an agenda. He had been a competent civil servant, and had his own ideas about providing good administration to the people without being hampered by a corrupt ruling elite. He also wanted to hasten the integration of J&K into India, and felt that Article 370 should be abrogated; he felt that more than protecting their identity, the special status was a breeding ground for activities against the Republic and, in any case, he did not seem to think that preserving the identities of ethnic minorities was more important than the consolidation of a national identity.

Farooq felt his turf being encroached upon by Jagmohan. From the moment Jagmohan came to J&K, he wanted every important file sent to him. Farooq could have stopped his bureaucrats from discussing matters with the Governor, but allowed Jagmohan to have his way. Farooq, despite knowing

what was coming, wanted to avoid being confrontational. "But the Governor's house became totally a Congress House," recalls Farooq. He felt that the Governor was scrutinising files and trying to dig up some dirt against him as grounds for dismissal.

Eventually, on 1 July 1984, the group led by G.M. Shah wanted to see Jagmohan (late in the night) to discuss "urgent matters". However, the Governor could meet them only the next day morning. On 2 July, the events seemed to move with dramatic speed, but with clockwork precision. Fourteen members of the Assembly went to meet Jagmohan early in the morning, and asserted that they now supported Shah. For his part, Shah promptly submitted a letter signed by the aforementioned fourteen members, confirming their withdrawal of support to Farooq. Simultaneously, the leader of the Congress legislature party, Iftekar Ansari, handed over a letter to Jagmohan stating that twenty-six members of his party had decided to support Shah.

The long and short of the sordid drama is that one fine morning Farooq was dismissed. A.G. Lone took sadistic pleasure in being the first to inform Farooq that fourteen of his MLAs (who had been hiding in Iqbal "Dithene's" house in Amirakadal) had withdrawn support, and were claiming to have the Congress party's backing in forming the government. When Farooq met Jagmohan a little later, he got the distinct impression that the latter, rather than swear in G.M. Shah as Chief Minister, was more keen to impose Governor's rule for a brief spell.

Farooq went to talk to his cabinet colleagues P. L. Handoo and Mohammad Shafi. They decided to advise the Governor to call a meeting of the Assembly and seek a vote of confidence. Delhi was getting impatient, however. Rajiv and his chum, Arun Nehru, wanted to know why it was taking so long to dismiss Farooq. Thus it happened that the despatcher carrying Farooq's letter with his colleagues' suggestions to Jagmohan returned with the letter of Farooq's dismissal.

The Playboy Image

The dismissal of Farooq's government resulted in a huge wave of sympathy for him. There were demonstrations and processions, and G.M. Shah (the new Chief Minister) had to use Draconian security measures to control Farooq's supporters. Eventually, Shah had to resort to repressive measures such as clamping curfew on the Valley in order to prevent pro-Farooq demonstrations from gathering momentum. For more than two months, Kashmir experienced curfew, and G.M. Shah's government earned the epithet "curfew raj".

Despite that, however, support for Farooq did not die down. Instead, ominously, many of his party cadres and active supporters, who were deeply angered at the treatment meted out to Farooq, went so far as to join the pro-Pakistan fringe element in Kashmir, on 14 August 1984, to celebrate Pakistan's Independence Day by hoisting the Pakistani flag

and bursting crackers in major urban centres all over the Valley.

It was this undiminishing popularity of Farooq Abdullah, while he was Chief Minister and after he was dismissed, that lay at the root of the many attempts at character assassination by his political opponents. They capitalised on the fact that Kashmir is a small place, where rumours spread rapidly, to good effect.

Political opponents such as the state Congress chose to depict him as a non-serious Chief Minister who was more interested in glamorous Bombay film actresses such as Shabana Azmi and Rekha than in developing J&K. Farooq, however, did nothing much to prove them wrong. His physical restlessness while he was Chief Minister and his impatience for file work only fuelled people's suspicions that he was, indeed, non-serious. His fascination for "Bollywood" and glamorous women, and his eagerness to entertain them, heightened speculation that he was a playboy. Furthermore, Farooq did not deny that he was a Casanova. Instead, he revelled in the image.

The first time that Farooq was linked to the ladies of tinsel town was after he returned from his March 1983 visit to Venezuela. The Chief Minister was part of the Indian Trade Fair Exhibition, and on his return, it was alleged that he had taken with him an actress from Bombay. She was never identified; the matter was never pursued; and the allegation died a quick death. But it was only the tip of the iceberg.

Farooq's frequent trips to Bombay gave birth to more rumours. These rumours started to gain legitimacy when J&K newspapers started carrying extracts from the gossip columns of film glossies which featured the state's Chief Minister!

For instance, *Star & Style*, in its 16 March 1984 issue, in the column "Frankly Speaking" by the late Devyani Chaudhary, described him thus: "Farooq Abdullah, Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, stretched out on the sofa of the Rajput suite at the Taj Hotel discussed outdoor shootings in Kashmir,

Rajesh-Dimple's impending divorce, *Filmfare* awards, and wondered why there were no awards for Chief Ministers. Then he discussed women, the 'difficult' ones, those who he said are difficult for nine days, to finally give in on the tenth day, etc. And all this after he had spent his only night in Bombay with Goldie Anand till 2 a.m...."

This sort of insubstantial journalism did nothing to raise Farooq in the eyes of his electorate. The local press, sensing it was onto a good "juicy morsel", and egged on by his political opponents, never missed an opportunity to drive another nail into his coffin. For instance, a photograph that appeared in the March 1984 issue of the *Onlooker* and showed Farooq sitting cosily with ageing actor Dev Anand and three luscious starlets, was reprinted, without any explanation, by a local newspaper.

Undoubtedly, Farooq himself was to blame. For instance, on 10 May 1984, during a dinner for 650 travel agents at his official residence, Farooq got up and started dancing with TV personality Hasina Akhtar. Word of such boisterousness was bound to get out and lower the Chief Minister's image in the eyes of many devout Muslims in the Valley.

The most infamous incident relates to film actress Shabana Azmi, and to this day, people in the Valley believe that Farooq was busy romancing her when he should have been running the state or planning a counter to New Delhi and Indira Gandhi's designs to dismiss his government. It remains a point on which people are sore with their former Chief Minister.

Farooq had gone up to Gulmarg on his motorcycle — the use of two-wheelers was also a subject of criticism by his opponents, who again felt it reflected his frivolous nature. He had gone ostensibly to check on the local administration, something he always liked to do surreptitiously, for he felt if he went as Chief Minister, everyone from the Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police downwards prepared for the visit, and he never got a real feel of the situation.

Farooq's random check led him to the swanky and relaxing Highland Park Hotel for tea. Since the hotel belonged to his uncle, his having tea there was nothing unusual.

Whilst he was there, he met V.V. Purie, the father of *India Today's* editor, Arun Purie, as also some of his friends from Delhi, who happened to be staying at the hotel. Shabana Azmi, who was shooting in Gulmarg, was also there. On meeting Farooq she joked that she had been on the motorcycles of a great many people, but never on a Chief Minister's. Farooq replied that it was a Chief Minister's duty to serve the people, and he would be glad to give her a ride.

They went to the Golf Club and returned, upon which Purie, who had a small camera with him, asked Farooq if he could take a photograph for his own collection. Farooq agreed on the condition that a copy would be sent to him. The photograph, instead, appeared soon after in *India Today*, and the state Congress used it to play up the fact that Farooq was too busy running around with film actresses to devote time to run the administration. Strangely, Farooq's only grouse was that Purie never sent him a copy of the photograph, as he had promised.

The rumours about Farooq's fascination for the film world and "his womanising" started to get vicious. Perhaps, the fact that he was enjoying the image of a playboy spurred his opponents to allege that he had remarried. Talk of Farooq's marrying another woman came up twice during his career.

The first woman that Farooq was "married off to" was Dilshad, the widow of his childhood friend Sheikh Javed. Farooq and Javed had known each other from the days of Biscoe School, so it was natural that their families would be close; even their daughters were good friends. One family dining with the other was a regular occurrence.

Dilshad also happened to be the sister of the Bombay film world's famous Khan brothers — Feroz and Sanjay. Many actors and actresses, who came to the Valley for their shootings, would come and meet, if not stay with, Javed and

Dilshad and Farooq got to know many film world personalities through them.

Javed passed away, and rumours spread that Farooq Abdullah was going to marry his widow. When the Chief Minister returned after a six-day visit to England, where he had gone to meet his in-laws, he found his mother, Begum Abdullah, looking unhappy. "Have you married Dilshad?" she asked.

Farooq was taken aback, and asked her what she was talking about. She told him of the rumours and the newspaper reports. He said that there was no truth in it, and that if he had had to do such a thing, he would at least have informed his family, for he was not one to keep back such secrets.

He went to the next room where Molly was, and although she did not say a word, he knew something was amiss. Farooq laughed and asked if she could believe the things his mother had just told him. For Molly, however, it was no laughing matter that people could spread false and malicious gossip about a person who had just lost her husband, and who had three daughters to look after. She then did something unexpected: she called Dilshad and invited her for a walk on the Zero Bridge. Both ladies bought ice-cream and walked to Amirakadal together. The rumour-mongers were silenced.

This, however, did not stop Farooq's opponents. At one point, Farooq was also "married off to" film actress Rekha (who was linked to Amitabh Bachchan, an MP and a Rajiv Gandhi confidant). Although Farooq still feels that Rekha was the most beautiful woman he has ever met (though he admits that he's met so many, it's difficult to single one out), he claims that he had only met her once on stage, and once at Javed and Dilshad's house. In June 1988, however, his daughter, studying at Sanawar in Himachal Pradesh, had seen the news item of his marriage in a newspaper and had shot off a telegram to her father, congratulating him.

The Chief Minister was not only linked to film actresses, but to other women as well, one example being Rukhsana

Sultan, who did not help matters by telling *Celebrity* magazine during her trip to Jammu in 1984 that Farooq was "gallant, refined and devastatingly handsome".

Farooq met Rukhsana after the death of Sanjay Gandhi. He had heard plenty of gossip about Rukhsana during Sanjay's slum-clearing campaigns, including the fact that she walked all over the place, during the demolitions, leaving behind her a trail of perfume. A common friend invited them both for dinner in Delhi, and Rukhsana complained of all the false stories that were appearing in the press about her. She invited Farooq to come and meet the Muslim population that had been displaced, to see how well respected she was amongst them. He, however, declined the offer.

Rukhsana also remarked that after Sanjay's death, she had been marginalised. She complained about the lack of kindness shown to her by Sanjay's mother, Indira Gandhi. After that first meeting they met quite often at their hostess' place and Farooq also visited her at her house in New Delhi, which stood where the Park Hotel later came up. Despite the mud-slinging by Farooq's political opponents, he and Rukhsana remain friends to this day.

In retrospect, Farooq feels unhappy at the image that was created, for it did not augur well in a conservative state like J&K. At the time, however, he did little to dispel the rumours, and so they stuck, to the extent that a Central Government officer, who was posted to Srinagar in 1987, said that upon arriving, he was told that the Chief Minister had contracted syphilis and would die any moment!

The people at large did, indeed, begin to believe that Farooq was too busy philandering to help them or to fulfil the mandate of safeguarding the Kashmiri Muslim identity. Sympathy had turned to anger by the time Farooq, towards the end of 1986, decided to make an early return to power, by entering into an understanding with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who came to occupy this high office after his mother's assassination on 31 October 1984.

“Sleeping with the Enemy”

While out of power between July 1984 and November 1986, Farooq Abdullah apparently decided that he was not going to pursue politics the way his father, Sheikh Abdullah, had. He was not going to spend years on end in jail, and he was not going to wait for elections, only to be toppled again and again.

Farooq made his views clear at a Lal Chowk meeting on 28 June 1989: “...if you have in mind someone who ends up in jail, you can count me out,” he told party activists. “I am the last person to like being jailed. I like to play golf. What am I going to do in jail? You may suggest that I read books to while away the time, but I would not like to do that because reading puts pressure on my eyes.”

Yet, like any other politician on the Indian subcontinent, he wanted to be back in the saddle as soon as possible. He was clear, though, that his politics would entail little sacrifice,

because he had decided to take Mridula Sarabhai's advice, and be the kind of husband and father to his family that his own father had never been. In fact, Farooq was, above all, a family man, and he adored Molly and his four children: Umar (born 1970), Safiya (born 1971), Henna (born 1975) and Sara (born 1978). (Presently, Umar is married and works in a Delhi hotel; Safiya teaches in a Delhi school; Henna is studying at Cardiff in Wales; and Sara, the only one born in Kashmir and named by her grandfather, lives in London with Molly.)

Coincidentally, it was another well-known family man who played a significant role, in more ways than one, in Farooq's hasty return to power: Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. The youthful Prime Minister, though politically naïve, had an endearing charm, and it was he who first attempted to apply a soothing balm to an angry Farooq Abdullah after the latter's dismissal in July 1984. Rajiv, then still an MP, read in horror press reports about an extremely irate Farooq who threatened to "liberate India from the fascist and communal rule of Indira Gandhi". Farooq was addressing a rally at the Mazaar-e-Shohda soon after his dismissal. At a public meeting in Rafiabad he accused Delhi of enslaving Kashmir and attempting to change the Muslim character of the state. He told a Mujahid Manzil rally that "Kashmir is for Kashmiris and anyone who thinks otherwise is living in a fool's paradise"; and most damning of all: "I'm sick of repeating *ad nauseam* that I am an Indian and that Kashmir's accession to India is irreversible. Why don't the Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu or Maharashtra have to say the same thing?" he snapped in an interview to the Pakistani magazine *Herald*.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited Kashmir on 27 October 1984, and she was disgusted with what she saw of G.M. Shah's administration. It was corrupt, it was unpopular, and she realised that it had to go. She returned to Delhi, and told her son how she felt.

Rajiv, who was also one of the All India Congress Committee's General Secretaries, secretly visited Farooq and had lunch with the former Chief Minister. It was a pleasant get-together, for Farooq was fond of Rajiv, and found him more straightforward than his late brother Sanjay.

During the meeting, Rajiv asked Farooq if he would mind meeting Indira Gandhi quietly, so that certain matters could be straightened out. Farooq was requested to come to Delhi. Despite all that had happened, and the ignominious manner in which Indira Gandhi had tossed him out, Farooq agreed.

The meeting was fixed. Farooq reached the capital for the meeting, which, however, got postponed and rescheduled for a later date. Meanwhile, a terrible tragedy occurred: on 31 October 1984, Indira Gandhi was assassinated.

When he heard the news, Farooq rushed over to 1, Safdarjung Road. Indira Gandhi's body was still at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). Rajiv Gandhi was somewhere in West Bengal and efforts were on to trace him. President Zail Singh, who was abroad, was already on his way back.

Rumours were afoot that Indira Gandhi was still alive, although Farooq had heard that she had died on the spot. For a while Pranab Mukherjee was being projected as the caretaker Prime Minister, although the moment Rajiv arrived, it was clear who would hold that position. The funeral took place, and the new government fumbled to find its feet. Farooq returned to Srinagar.

With a new Prime Minister in the saddle, Farooq had to wait as Rajiv came to terms with his job and the other problems he had inherited from his mother. Nonetheless, Farooq got the ball rolling in 1985 itself, soon after Rajiv came to power, after general elections, and in statement after statement, in speeches and press conferences, Farooq kept urging Rajiv to undo the injustice of July 1984, and to mend fences with him.

Rajiv Gandhi, at the very beginning, played hard to get, while he reiterated his support to G.M. Shah's government. Personally, Rajiv was inclined to reinstalling Farooq; it seems that Rajiv's advisers at the time, however, had persuaded him to position himself to ensure that when Farooq was reinstalled, it would be on New Delhi's terms.

This turn of events put Farooq in a dilemma. He even considered lining up with the Opposition but realised that such a strategy would take him a while to come back to power, and he was unsure if he could sustain his supporters' morale for too long.

Farooq was, nevertheless, forced to explore the other option. On 30 March 1985, he met N.T. Rama Rao in New Delhi, and both discussed floating a new party, "Bharat Desam", which would be a national front of regional Opposition parties. Within Kashmir, he went about projecting himself as *Riyasat ki Tehrik-e-Hurriyat ki Alamat* (symbol of the state's freedom movement). In April, he declared: "Our patience has been exhausted to the limit and if justice is not done, the bridge which links us with India will be broken."

Farooq called for a Kashmir *bandh* in May, and it was a success. People had begun to get agitated under Shah's oppressive regime. Prophetically, Farooq warned of a Punjab-like situation unless G.M. Shah was dismissed: "The present movement launched by us will pass into the hands of those over whom we have no control", he threatened.

Finally, on 8 August 1985, Farooq and his mother met Rajiv Gandhi, and the meeting went off well enough to give Farooq the confidence that a settlement would be reached. His current allies warned him against it. Mirwaiz Farooq felt it would be a "betrayal of the people of the state" and would "erode people's faith in the democratic set-up".

Seeing the writing on the wall, G.M. Shah offered to step down from power when he returned from Haj on 4 September. Even Mufti Mohammad Sayeed threatened to withdraw support, and in November, Shah made a last

attempt to save himself by offering to mend fences with Farooq, provided a new Chief Minister was chosen from outside their families.

The proverbial straw that broke the camel's back came soon after a judicial order directing the reopening of the disputed mosque in Ayodhya in January 1986. Riots broke out in the Valley, and several temples were torched in retaliation. February was a month of violence, curfew, flag marches and tension, and so, in March, the Congress withdrew support to G.M. Shah's ministry. It fell and Governor's rule was imposed.

Farooq now began to demand early polls, but an understanding between him and Rajiv Gandhi seemed elusive until 12 May 1986, when Mufti Mohammad Sayeed was taken out of the state and inducted into Rajiv Gandhi's cabinet as Tourism Minister. After that Rajiv and Farooq met, and tried to thrash out the details of an understanding. Rajiv Gandhi wanted "no compromise with Farooq Abdullah at the cost of the Congress", and Farooq retaliated by threatening to have all his MLAs resign from the house to force its dissolution.

In July, the Congress offered a coalition, and Farooq responded by saying he was not averse to it. The next month, the Government of India chose him to lead the goodwill Haj delegation to Saudi Arabia. When he returned, Transport Minister Rajesh Pilot discussed with him matters pertaining to the interim coalition government and electoral adjustments that could be made: they agreed that in the coming elections, the NC would contest 60 per cent of the seats, and the Congress, the remaining 40 per cent. On 2 November 1986, the political understanding was announced to the world as the Rajiv-Farooq accord, and Farooq Abdullah was sworn in as Chief Minister on 6 November, with elections being announced for March 1987.

Farooq sought to rationalise the accord to his people by emphasising that it was vital for J&K's economic development. It was a fact that the state economy was very fragile, and the problems on this front contributed in no small measure to the

disaffection that led to numbers of youngsters entering the movement for *azaadi* a few years later.

For all the years since 1947, hand in hand with political deprivation, had come economic deprivation. As with several other states in the country (Bihar, or Assam, for instance), the Centre had practised a sort of "internal colonialism" with respect to Kashmir, keeping the Valley restricted to being a market economy. Indian goods and money came in, but the benefits were cornered by the unholy nexus comprising bureaucrats, politicians and capitalists. It was galling to most Kashmiris that their livelihood depended on the national highway. Everything, from vegetables to televisions, came via the road on the Banihal pass, which was subject to closure by avalanches during the winters, thus keeping the people at its mercy.

In addition, all the rich natural resources of the Valley, including timber, handicrafts and fruit, were lost as there was effectively no industrialisation in the state. Tourism was considered a 'prostitute' economy because it was felt that it brought no permanent gains to the Valley's economy. Yet, even that had suffered: in 1989, J&K was behind Goa in tourist statistics even though it had been far ahead eight years earlier. Tourist arrivals had gone up only marginally, from 6.5 lakhs to 7.2 lakhs, due to lack of adequate facilities. The lacunae existed, even though tourism was the biggest revenue-generating activity after agriculture.

The Centre did not help out. Planning Commission figures show that, since 1975, there has been a decline in the state's budgetary provisions. Not by accident, it was in 1975 that the party forming the government in Kashmir was different from the party in power at the Centre.

Keeping these realities in mind, Farooq and Rajiv sought to rationalise their understanding by saying that the alliance between the Congress and the NC would benefit the state as development projects with long gestation periods and massive capital investment requirements could be taken up for long-

term economic gains. Two power projects, for instance, were envisaged: the 480 MW (megawatt), Rs. 4500 crore Uri project in the Valley, and the 380 MW Dulhasti project in Doda — one on the Jhelum river and the other on the Chenab.

It was a different matter that these two projects did not finally come through. In fact, nothing seemed to go right and the resultant continued unemployment of youth definitely became a factor in the militancy that erupted a few years later. For instance, till 1985, agricultural college graduates were being absorbed in jobs. Since then, however, there are about 500 who remain unemployed as are another 2000 engineering graduates. On 15 March 1988, many civil engineers who were unemployed made a show of burning their certificates in Srinagar. Even the JKLF in the 1990s would, at one stage, come to be known as the "engineers' outfit", following an influx of engineering graduates into the higher levels of its hierarchy.

In this background, Farooq had figured that if Delhi had a stake in the state government, it would be more responsive to J&K's economic needs and would help push the state's development rapidly forward. This was essentially the argument by which he hoped to sell the alliance to his people.

The Kashmiris, however, would not buy it. For them, it was the last straw. Not only did Farooq's impatience to return to power seem undignified to Kashmiri Muslim pride, but he was also perceived to be "getting into bed" with the Kashmiri Muslim's worst enemy — New Delhi. And once he was "sleeping" with the enemy, he was not going to be able to ensure the safeguarding of their political identity. No matter how loudly he shouted, and how often he claimed that he had *not* sold out — at Hazratbal, at Mujahid Manzil, at the medical college — no one wanted to listen to or believe him. The accord knocked the bottom out of his support.

All the other political elements in the Valley had seen what was coming, and had also grasped the growing

discontent amongst the youth. Even ordinary bus accidents would lead to a crowd chanting slogans such as "*Mard-e-Momin, Mard-e-Haq, Zia-ul Haq*" (a believer, a man of truth, the light of God). (Zia-ul-Haq was then the President of Pakistan.) Pakistan's Independence day, 14 August, saw the illumination of the river banks of Baramulla, and the glow of candle light could be seen in the hostels of the University of Kashmir, overlooking Dal Lake. Groups such as Al Jihad and People's League called for the observation of 15 August (India's Independence Day) as a black day.

To make matters worse, Kashmiris felt that Muslims were generally being harassed all over India: they felt this was manifest in the Ayodhya issue, the Supreme court judgement on Shah Bano's divorce settlement, the writ before the Kerala High Court for a ban on the Quran, and the rumours that Muslim policemen in Karnataka and Kerala were being forced to shave their beards.

So, on 21 April 1986, alternative political mainstream elements came together to form the United Muslims Front (UMF). This conglomerate of religious and political organisations was presided over by Shia leader, Moulvi Abbas Ansari. It included the Jamaat-e-Islami, the Jamaat-e-Tulaba, the Jamaat-e-Ahl-e-Hadis, the Anjuman Tahafuz-ul Islami, the Muslim Employees Front, and the World Muslim Organisation. All of them were keen to politically cash in on the fact that Farooq had sold himself out to Rajiv Gandhi.

The worsening job situation fuelled the young Kashmiri Muslim's discontent. Governor Jagmohan changed the criteria for job reservation so that the percentage of Muslim candidates selected by the Subordinate Services Recruitment Board came down drastically. As Farooq would tell Syed Ali Shah Gilani in the Assembly a year later, the percentage of Muslims working in Central Government offices in J&K was only 5 per cent (33 out of 611 posts); in the banking sector only about 1.48 per cent (eight Muslims out of 448 employees); there were no Muslims in the Customs and

Central Excise departments; only 18.87 per cent of the staff at the HMT watch factory were Muslims, while only 10.52 per cent were Muslims in the Accountant General's office. In the state government, only 2795 employees were Muslims out of a total staff strength of 8370, a mere 33.39 per cent in a state where more than 60 per cent of the population was Muslim.

On 2 September 1986, the Mirwaiz of south Kashmir, Qazi Nissar Ahmed, defied Jagmohan's order banning the sale of meat on Janmashtami (Hindu deity Lord Krishna's birthday) by publicly slaughtering a sheep on a road in his native Anantnag. He was arrested, and the UMF was disbanded. In its place came into existence the Muslim United Front (MUF), launched "to protect and safeguard the basic right of the Muslim majority community in J&K". Its spokesman, Professor Abdul Ghani, lambasted the "indiscriminate arrests of Muslim youth, the victimisation and harassment, discrimination in admissions to educational institutions and recruitment, and issuance of orders by the Jagmohan regime which were aimed at destroying the basic socio-political structure of J&K".

Some of the charges against Qazi Nissar made amusing reading: he was accused of inciting people to withdraw money from national banks in order to weaken India, as also to produce more children, who could finally launch an armed rebellion against India. At his hearing at the Jammu High Court, however, Qazi Nissar told journalists that he was a "true nationalist fighting for rights within the framework of the Indian Constitution". His dispute with Jamaat-e-Islami's Gilani, over the finality of accession to India, would eventually threaten to split the MUF.

The MUF kept quiet over the accession issue, and announced its intentions to go to the polls. It received the support of the People's League and the Islamic Students' League. Mirwaiz Farooq stuck to his alliance with Farooq and was rewarded with two constituencies to contest from.

Election rallies got underway, and many a clash was seen between the supporters of the National Conference and the MUF. It was common to hear pro-Pakistan songs at MUF rallies, which swelled in size with each subsequent meeting. Interestingly, the MUF repeatedly called upon Kashmiri Muslims to liberate themselves from Delhi's "Brahmin imperialism". This was a direct call to the identity that had been at the core of Kashmir's politics since 1931 and must have unnerved Farooq Abdullah.

The administration started acting high-handedly with the MUF. On 1 March 1987, three candidates were arrested: Srinagar Jamaat-e-Islami leader and Amirakadal candidate, Mohammad Yusuf Shah (who would later be known as Hizbul Mujahideen's supreme commander Syed Salahuddin); Mushtaq Ahmed Sagar, of Habbakadal; and Syed Fayaz Naqshband of Hazratbal.

Despite the anxieties of the administration, observers predicted that multicornered contests would hurt the MUF in many places. Nonetheless, the taunts of Qazi Nissar worried the Chief Minister: Qazi Nissar declared that he would accept Farooq in the MUF if the latter repeated three slogans: "*Assam ke katilon wapas jao*" (killers of Assam, go back — a reference blaming the Congress for the massacre of Muslim refugees from Bangladesh in Nellie, Assam, in 1983); "*Yeh mulk hamara hai iska faisla hum karenge*" (we will decide the future of our land); and "*Delhi walo khabardar hum Kashmiri hain tayyar*" (beware, Delhi, we Kashmiris are prepared). There could be no clearer indication that the MUF felt that Farooq, having sold out to Delhi, had lost the right to represent the Kashmiri Muslims.

Ironically, Farooq had used the first slogan Qazi Nissar quoted during the 1983 elections. All he could do now was to threaten to jail the MUF leaders (for ten years in prisons outside J&K) if they continued to poison the minds of the people.



Farooq with President
Luis Herrera Campins
in Venezuela (1983)





Announcing the 1986 accord: Farooq with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi (at Udhampur)



Farooq as the leader of the 1987 Indian Haj delegation meets the King Faisal of Saudi Arabia

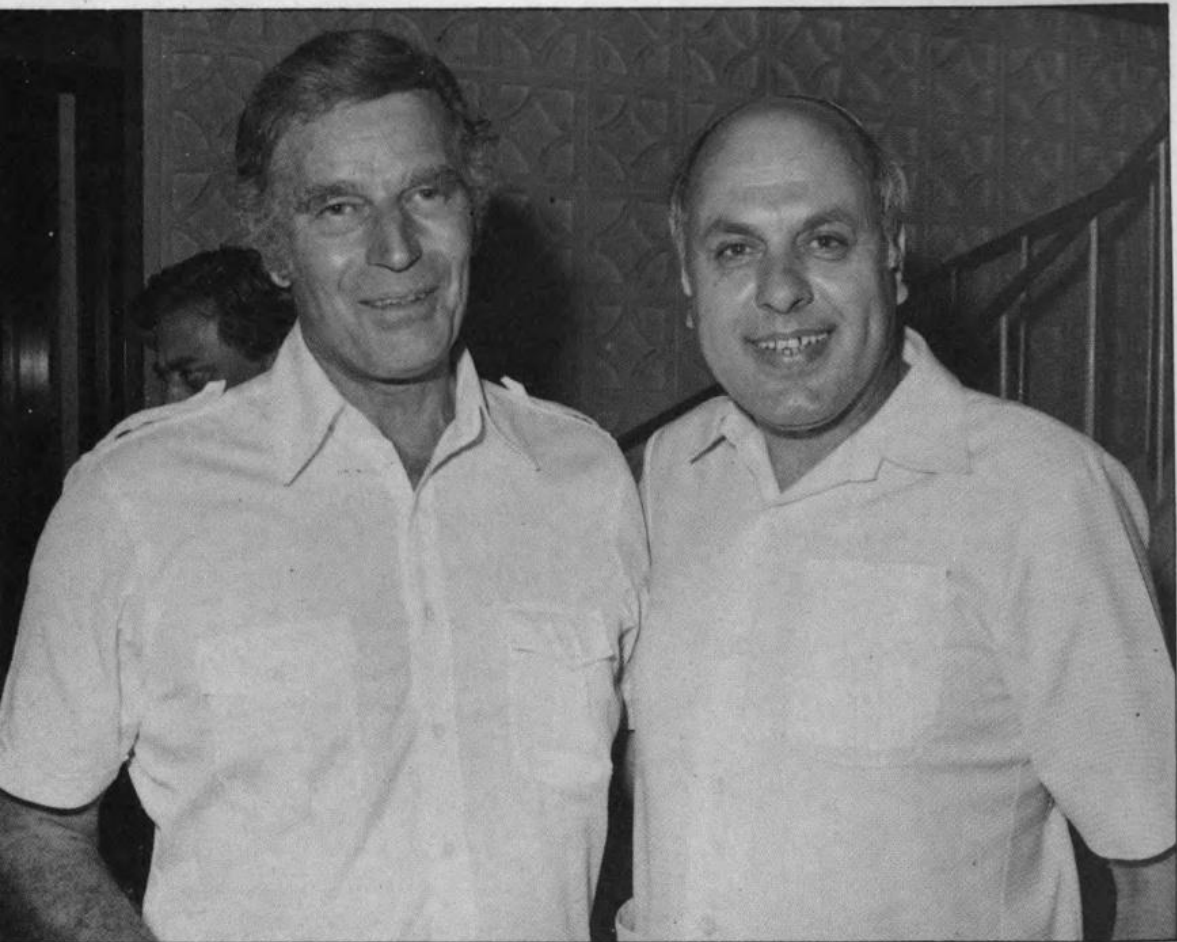
Original from



The drift begins: Farooq with his officials during his second tenure as Chief Minister



Farooq on a visit to Ladakh during his second tenure as Chief Minister



Breaking the Ten Commandments? Farooq with "Moses" (Charlton Heston)



In august company: Farooq with UN Secretary General Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali (Geneva, 1994)

The news reports appearing during the week prior to the 23 March polling read like a police bulletin. Violent clashes took place every day, and on the day of the polling itself, the turnout was 60 per cent but large-scale booth capturing and ballot box snatching were reported.

When the results eventually came in, the NC-Congress alliance swept the polls, winning around 60 seats, while the MUF, which won 31 per cent of the votes polled, bagged only five seats. The MUF alleged large-scale rigging and refused to accept the "officially manipulated verdict, which is nothing but a fraud [perpetrated] on the Constitution and democratic norms."

Farooq now asserts that although he himself did no rigging, he "heard that some people indulged in rigging in some of the constituencies". The MUF alleged that candidates such as Mohammad Yusuf Shah had been leading by a large margin throughout the counting, right until the final round, but then suddenly, they were declared losers.

Sources close to Farooq at the time have since admitted that, for instance, in Amirakadal (the place from which Yusuf Shah contested), the election was rigged by the returning officer, who was later rewarded with the chairmanship of a local bank by the winning candidate, Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah.

Coming after a series of shocks in the 1980s — including Farooq's dismissal, and his subsequent capitulation to New Delhi — the allegations of rigging proved to be the proverbial last straw. Many MUF candidates and workers were picked up and thrown in jail including Mohammad Yusuf Shah and an election agent of his named Mohammad Yasin Malik. On the night of 26 March 1987 the police arrested over 60 MUF activists, raided their head office and seized their records. This action prompted rallies, sloganeering ("Rajiv-Farooq accord fraud fraud"), and threats of agitation ("We will do what Mrs. Aquino did in the Philippines").

What was most telling was that there were no post-poll celebrations, as there had been in 1983 and in 1977. MUF activists started courting arrest. And according to one of the first militants ever to be caught by the state police, MUF activists sat in their jail cells and discussed going across to "Azad Kashmir", where Pakistan had promised to provide them with arms and training, to help them in their fight against India.

ISI: Proxy War Strategies

It was General Abdul Akhtar Rehman Khan, the Director-General of the Pakistan Army's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency from 1980 to 1987, who conceptualised and laid the foundation for Pakistan's machiavellian scheme of insurgency in J&K.

From the time the British left the subcontinent in 1947, Pakistan has claimed proprietorship over Kashmir, on the grounds of religious similarities, geographical contiguity, and the dependence of the Valley's economy on West Punjab. Unfortunately for Pakistan, India's ideology of secularism matched Kashmir's ethos, and so Kashmir acceded to India.

This accession was never accepted by Pakistan, which tried to exert international pressure over the years on India to hand over the Valley. In 1962, circumstances subtly changed international reactions: India lost a good deal of its territory in a war with China and, simultaneously, the West,

which had so far given its implicit support to Pakistan's diplomatic campaign, developed sympathy for a country that had faced up to the "communist menace" of Red China. When this happened, Pakistan could see the bottom falling out of its diplomatic propaganda.

At the same time, the demoralisation of the Indian Army after its defeat at Chinese hands and the perceivedly weak post-Nehru leadership in New Delhi, led Pakistan to consider settling the Kashmir problem militarily. China encouraged these ambitions.

Ironically, Pakistan's strategy was undermined by the Kashmiris themselves, who not only did not rise up in rebellion against India, but also exposed the infiltration of the Pakistan Army into the Valley in 1965.

Pakistan had sent in armed infiltrators in early August 1965, with the objectives of sabotaging military targets and disrupting communications, and, as a long-term measure, distributing arms to the Kashmiris to initiate a guerilla movement with a view to starting an uprising. Unfortunately, the local leadership, comprising persons like Mirwaiz Moulvi Farooq, did not give Pakistan any support, and when the first batch of infiltrators were spotted by Kashmiri villagers, they informed the Indian Army, which captured the intruders and was thus alerted to a possible invasion.

Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri took the war into the Punjab plains, and forced a ceasefire. International pressure forced Shastri to give away at the negotiating table at Tashkent (in the former USSR) in January 1966 what had been won in the battlefield, but it laid to rest any plans Pakistan had of trying to wrest Kashmir through an all-out war.

After Pakistan lost another war with India in December 1971 and found the majority of the citizens of its eastern wing opting to form a new nation called Bangladesh, it realised that it was in a tight corner. The ground situation in Kashmir was also affected by the 1971 war. Consequently, Pakistan did not do much more than voluntarily raise the Kashmir issue

in international fora, though the earlier stridency and follow-up were lacking, for the Pakistanis well realised the realities of power as well as the ground situation. They kept in touch with the developments in Kashmir, but never rocked the boat or raised the pitch too high.

It is alleged that Kashmiri boys had been crossing over to Pakistan since 1965, as members of Al Fatah. While this may have been true of individuals of the JKLF, such as Maqbool Butt, in the large majority of cases, there was no such insidious activity. Some of the old Al Fatah boys are now government servants in J&K; they claim that they travelled legally to visit relatives and stayed on for a few months in Pakistan. They received some exposure to Pakistani propaganda about the need to liberate Kashmir from India but there was nothing more than that.

Pakistan was infuriated with the 1975 accord between Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Abdullah, but there was nothing it could do about it. While both Bhutto and Indira were alive, the two leaders were aware of the assurances he had given her at Shimla in 1972, albeit verbal, and so she knew he would not cross the limit. During his regime, things remained subdued.

In Pakistan, however, there was a dramatic change of leadership. Following widespread civil disturbances over what Bhutto's opposition alleged were rigged elections, Bhutto's Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Mohammad Zia-ul Haq, staged a military takeover and declared martial law on 5 July 1977. About two years later, Bhutto was executed after having been found guilty of conspiring to murder a member of the National Assembly, Ahmad Raza Kasuri, in November 1974. Zia's supremacy was, thereafter, unchallenged.

In a windfall for Pakistan and its new President, Zia-ul Haq, war broke out in Afghanistan in 1979. The United States of America decided to use Pakistan in a proxy war against the Soviet Union which had gone into Afghanistan to aid the government against Islamic rebels. Pakistan readily agreed to

this proposal, making it a recipient of US financial and military largesse. Pakistan conducted operations against the Soviet-backed Najibullah regime in Kabul, which made it an international master in the art of guerilla warfare.

General Akhtar was the man in charge of the ISI from the beginning of the Afghan war. He revelled in the situation for it helped him to develop capabilities that he felt he might one day use in Kashmir, if and when the conditions suited his designs. General Zia, however, cautioned him that he did not want to repeat the mistakes of 1965: the next time Pakistan got itself militarily involved, it would be with the complete cooperation of the Muslims of Kashmir.

Maulana Abdul Bari, the Amir of "Azad Kashmir's" Jamaat-e-Islami, in an article entitled "Who Launched Militancy in Kashmir?" (published in the December 1993 issue of the fortnightly *Jehad-e-Kashmir*), wrote that he met General Zia in 1982 with a plan to incite insurgency in Kashmir — the Islamic revolution in Iran was one of the several international factors which led him to believe that Islamic fundamentalism was gaining ground in the Valley. General Zia gave him the go-ahead, and with the help of Pakistan's Intelligence Bureau, Maulana Bari convinced his counterpart in Kashmir, Maulana Saduddin, to visit Pakistan and meet General Akhtar.

Within the ISI and the rest of the Pakistan Army, General Akhtar had built up a daunting reputation. He had been trained as an artillery officer, and had fought against India in all the three wars. As a young man, he had witnessed the madness of partition, in which an estimated total of one million people from both sides of the Indo-Pak border had died. Brigadier Mohammad Yousaf, the man in charge of the Afghan Bureau in the ISI, has written in *The Bear Trap* that General Akhtar's hatred of India stemmed from those atrocities at the time of Pakistan's independence.

He had a cold and reserved personality, and his reputation as a disciplinarian made him a tough officer to serve under.

According to Brigadier Yousaf, he had succeeded in reaching such a high rank, thanks to his energy, his boldness and his readiness to drive his command to its limit. Under the shrewd and ruthless leadership of General Zia, he was the right man at the right time as far as Pakistan was concerned.

While laying the groundwork for his Kashmir plan, General Akhtar found the growing separatist movement in Punjab intriguing. Besides the destabilising effect it would have on India, he saw that from a strategic point of view, the encouragement of the Khalistan movement would make the Indian defence of Kashmir difficult. So Pakistan gave shelter and logistical support to Sikh separatists, and for a long time India's main concern in Punjab became the involvement of the foreign factor. (Ironically, however, one of the factors contributing to the wane of militancy in Punjab in the early 1990s was the realisation that, at the international level, Pakistan was more supportive of the Kashmir movement.)

Right from the early 1980s, General Zia had been quietly active on the Kashmir front. After Maulana Saduddin's meeting with General Akhtar in 1982, the Jamaat-e-Islami began sending small batches of young Kashmiris for training to "Azad Kashmir". By this time, training techniques had been perfected by the Pakistanis for the Afghan Mujahideen, and so it was easy to apply those developed as well as evolving techniques in "Azad Kashmir". According to Kashmiri sources, militants who went across at this time included Ajaz Dar, Ishfaq Majid Wani, Ahsan Dar, and Javed Mir Nalka. In 1983, Indian and Pakistani troops clashed in the Karakoram mountains, after India discovered an effort by the Pakistanis to take control of the Siachen glacier. The line of control ended at the base of the glacier, and Pakistan intended to take control since Siachen overlooked the Karakoram pass which linked the part of J&K occupied by Pakistan (northern areas) with the part occupied by China (Aksai Chin). The bulk purchase of mountaineering and high-altitude equipment by the Pakistan Army alerted India to what was being planned.

As a result, India took control of the glacier and became engaged in a localised war with Pakistani troops entrenched at the base of the glacier. The shoot-out continues to this day.

A boost to Pakistan's plans came in 1984, when Farooq was dismissed. Dissatisfaction with the dismissal affected large sections of the Kashmiri youth, and many turned away from Indian democracy towards the JKLF, which was connected (through the KLA), to the sensational Mhatre kidnapping and murder.

Exploiting the growing popularity of the JKLF, General Akhtar got in touch with some of Maqbool Butt's colleagues, after Butt's execution in Delhi in 1984. Batches of Kashmiri boys were sent to "Azad Kashmir" during the 1984-86 period, and the number of Pakistan-trained militants in Kashmir rose during 1989 to 300, according to the figures Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah was given by the RAW. Among the boys who went at this time were the HAJY group, the acronym standing for an initial of each member, namely, Hamid Sheikh, Ashfaq Majid Wani, Javed Ahmed Mir (alias Nalka) and Mohammad Yasin Malik (the MUF election agent). Others, such as Mohammad Abdullah Bangroo and Nasir Bhaktiar, were sent to Afghanistan to fight.

The Government of India received reports about young men surreptitiously crossing into the country. However, serious problems were not anticipated because it was assumed that Pakistan would not cross the "threshold of tolerance", which governs international relations between neighbouring states. For a long time, in fact, General Zia did not dare to cross that line. However, Mhatre's assassination and Farooq's dismissal led to a series of circumstances which culminated in Pakistan pulling out all stops in planning a guerilla war in Kashmir.

Pakistan had a task on its hands, for right from its inception, the JKLF had had a love-hate relationship with the Pakistani authorities. The JKLF always had the fight for freedom on its agenda, which was unacceptable to Pakistan.

As a result, there was a great deal of debate within the ISI on whether or not to provide the JKLF with sufficient fire-power and weaponry. So till 1985-86, the JKLF was restricted to sporadically triggering off dramatic incidents, followed by feverish political and diplomatic activity with a view to internationalising the Kashmir issue.

The JKLF, however, was unable to establish a regular unit in J&K for a long time. Mainstream political activity thwarted all attempts in this direction till 1986. Another reason for the lukewarm reaction to it may have been the ethnic differences within the JKLF: while Maqbool Butt and other pioneers were Kashmiri Muslims, Amanullah was from Baltistan. Butt wanted to ensure the dominance of Kashmiri Muslims from the start as he wanted the JKLF to be totally 'indigenous'. So, from the very beginning, the JKLF hierarchy had to deal with the tensions between Kashmiris and non-Kashmiris.

The JKLF routinely raised its voice for the independence of Kashmir. On 9 June 1982, in Birmingham, for instance, it criticised General Zia's stand that Gilgit, Skardu and the rest of the northern areas were part of Pakistan. It urged the youth to struggle for the liberation of Kashmir: "If we raise our voice in Kashmir, it will evoke response in London, America, Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi," the JKLF proclaimed. "We do not want to be called Hindustani, Pakistani or Chinese."

After Farooq's toppling, the JKLF's importance grew. Mirwaiz Moulvi Farooq, who was trying to edge out J&K Jamaat-e-Islami leader, Syed Ali Shah Gilani, for a seat on the Rabita Aalam-e-Islami (Supreme Council of World Islamic League), in March 1985, while in Jeddah, met JKLF members Raja Azad, Sardar Saleem, Raja Nawaz, Raja Parvez and Mohammad Afzal. He lauded their struggle, and beat Gilani in the elections in Riyadh soon after.

Further attention was focussed on the JKLF when, on 5 September 1985, its leader, Amanullah Khan, was arrested with five other members, in Luton, England, by the Scotland Yard under Britain's Prevention of Terrorism Act. However,

Scotland Yard had to release Amanullah due to lack of evidence, and he was deported from Britain to Pakistan. When he arrived, he found that Hashim Qureshi, the JKLF man who had hijacked an aircraft to Lahore in 1971, had heard and spurned General Akhtar's proposals to wage an insurgency (soon after Maqbool Butt's hanging in 1984).

"All four of us in the negotiating committee felt infuriated and told (General Akhtar) in no uncertain terms that we were not agents but revolutionaries," Qureshi wrote later in the Urdu weekly *Chattan*. The talks broke down, and the ISI apparently made Qureshi's life miserable.

Amanullah arrived in September 1986, and organisational elections were held for the post of Chairman of the JKLF. He contested against Qureshi, and General Akhtar ensured Qureshi's defeat. Humiliated by Amanullah and harassed by General Akhtar, Qureshi left Pakistan in October 1986 for Holland, where he obtained political asylum and now spends his time trying to revitalise his group.

With one obstacle gone, the Pakistanis had to consider bringing the rest of the JKLF around to their view. In this they were helped by events in Kashmir, where there was anger over rigging of Assembly elections in March 1987. Also, the resurgence of anti-India and anti-secular forces in the Valley set Pakistan thinking that the time had come for engineering internal disturbances in Kashmir. Since the JKLF possessed the experience and expertise, and since it had become the most organised outfit under Amanullah, it was chosen as the appropriate group to give an initial thrust to the insurgency.

First, however, the "Azad Kashmir" and Pakistan-based leadership of the JKLF had to be convinced to undertake an armed insurgency with the all-out backing and support of the ISI. For this, the new head of the ISI, Major-General Hamid Gul, who took over from General Akhtar in April 1987, directed two officers to take charge of the Kashmir operation and motivate the JKLF leadership. These two officers were Brigadier Gulzar (a close relation of Dr. Farooq Haider,

another non-Kashmiri leader of the JKLF) and Brigadier Barkatullah Khan (a co-brother of Amanullah). According to JKLF members, these two officers, during 1987-88, successfully motivated the JKLF to take Pakistan's help in waging the guerilla war.

Sardar Rashid Hasrat, another non-Kashmiri leader of the "Azad Kashmir" unit of the JKLF, was given approval by Amanullah to spearhead the implementation of an action plan. He deputed senior "Azad Kashmir"-based JKLF leader, Rauf Kashmiri, to travel to the Valley on four occasions during 1987 and 1988, not only to arrange the induction of trainees, but also to establish contact with pro-JKLF elements in the Valley for the commencement of a militant movement.

Now, the ISI shook off its inertia and cultivated the JKLF leadership, and this time, it was provided with all the material help it required to organise the insurgency in J&K. In the beginning, separatist groups of all hues, including the Jamaat-e-Islami cadres, were taken to "Azad Kashmir" for arms training under the tutelage of the JKLF. Even leaders such as Ahsan Dar and Maqbool Elahi, who would later become members of the pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen, were trained in 1988 as volunteers of the JKLF.

In September 1988, the JKLF organised a convention at Muzaffarabad in "Azad Kashmir". A resolution was passed to the effect that after years of diplomatic and political offensives, the time was now ripe for waging an armed struggle. Amanullah Khan said that Pakistan had appreciated the JKLF's point of view and had, therefore, agreed to extend financial and other assistance to it to promote the armed struggle in the Valley.

The HAJY (Hamid, Ashfaq, Javed, Yasin) group had by that time set up an underground JKLF unit in Srinagar to build up the movement. It became the focal point towards which youngsters were directed to go so that they could cross the line of control, receive elementary training that would last seven to ten days, and come back proficient in the use of light

weapons and explosive devices. So many youngsters were being summoned for training that the J&K police were constantly catching boys who were either on their way or had just come back, and at one point, on 8 January 1989, had even proposed to Delhi that a border police force be set up along the lines of the paramilitary Border Security Force (BSF).

There were minor dissensions: People's League activist Shabir Ahmed Shah, in an interview to *Kashmir Times* in February 1989, felt that the "'Azad Kashmir' training project was premature" and that the organisers had not done their homework properly. While stating that the project of imparting arms training to Kashmiri youth was cleared with the prior permission of General Zia, and that General Akhtar Rehman was one of the organisers of the plan, Shah felt that while training of youth in the handling of arms was good, "taking up of arms against India at this juncture would be suicidal".

At the same time, Shabir Shah admitted that the response of the people was very encouraging, and that there had definitely been a change in their thinking. The unprecedented rigging in the last elections, he said, had made the youth that supported the MUF do a rethink about their own future and status within India. The repressive measures of the government, denial of basic democratic rights, indiscriminate arrests of people and curbing of civil liberties had made them raise the banner of revolt, according to Shah.

Such statements were music to Pakistan's ears, which threw *chinars* on top of the smouldering embers, and recruited an increasing number of disaffected youth for training in sophisticated firearms and explosives. Having waged a successful guerilla war in Afghanistan, the Pakistanis were now ready to divert their resources and expertise to Kashmir. Grenades and other weapons such as Kalashnikovs made increasing appearances in the Valley during 1989. In May, the JKLF set up ten suicide squads: Javed Ahmed Nalka's "Al Jihad"; Abdul Gafar's "Hamza"; Muzaffar Shah's "Victory

Commandos"; Ghulam Hasan Lone's "Commando Force"; Mohammad Ashraf's "Shaheed Zia Tiger Force"; Javed Ahmed Koul's "Al Fatah"; Sheikh Abdul Hamid's "Sajad Janbaz Commando Force"; Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar's "Al Maqbool"; Shafat Rasool's "Ikhwan-ul Muslimeen"; and Rouful Islam's "Pak Commando Force".

Pakistan, however, was worried about the long-term implications of the JKLF leading the guerilla war against India, and decided to patronise its own *tanzeems* (organisations). It had, for a short while, diverted some assistance through the Hizb-e-Islami, a group aligned with Afghan leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, in 1989. Then, some time early in November, the Jamaat-e-Islami, which, although pro-Pakistan from the very beginning, had been lukewarm about turning militant, decided that it could no longer stay out of the movement, and started its own *tanzeems*, including the Hizbul Mujahideen, which comprised mostly Jamaat-e-Islami cadres, and the Allah Tigers, which enforced a strict Islamic code on Kashmiris, including the use of purdah by Kashmiri women. In addition, Pakistan later began to encourage some of the so-called suicide squads of the JKLF to splinter off and form their own groups.

Pakistan also, in late November 1989, directed the Hizbul Mujahideen to work closely with Mohammad Ayub Thakur and Ghulam Nabi Fai, two prominent Kashmiris who had left the subcontinent and were now agitating on an international level. Thakur, a former professor at SP College in Srinagar, who originally came from Kupwara, settled in London, and even "guided" some British "scholars" who were writing on the Kashmir issue. Fai became famous in Washington, where he raised the issue with successive US senators, Congress persons, and even Presidents.

How was it that Pakistan finally crossed this "threshold of tolerance"? How did it gain the confidence to do so, knowing fully well that India could hit back in a lethal way? The memory of 1965, when Shastri had taken the war into

Pakistan's plains, had not left General Zia's mind, and that is perhaps the reason why he decided that the only way to deter India from carrying out another invasion, in the event of a "localised" conflict in Kashmir, was to use the threat of a nuclear war.

As a logical consequence of such thinking, key figures in the Pakistan establishment started giving broad hints that they possessed nuclear capability, and that they could assemble a device within a short time. Rumours of a stockpile of highly enriched uranium (HEU), the material for crude atomic devices, also circulated around the globe.

Yet, Pakistan could not go too far. Its Army could not invade Kashmir, for instance, because their nuclear threat was a deterrent, and not an offensive capability, for they were unsure of the extent of India's nuclear arsenal. For their purposes, thus, nuclear blackmail, coupled with a war of attrition, being fought for them by disaffected Kashmiri youngsters, was the best way to attack India.

It was in this atmosphere that Farooq Abdullah found himself, particularly during 1989. As we shall see, he had anticipated it. Yet, he felt helpless, as things had gone too far and it was perhaps too late to do anything about it: the situation on the ground was anti-Farooq, and Pakistan's agencies were just too ruthless to let a heaven-sent opportunity like this pass them by.

The Chilling Prophecy

You should remember what happened in Batmaloo in 1965 when the entire area in Srinagar city was set on fire following receipt of reports of some Pakistan-trained raiders hiding there," Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah told an Eid-ul-Fitr gathering at Hazratbal on 7 May 1989, while declaring an "open war" against militants. "I don't want to repeat Batmaloo and convert the entire city into a ruin. I don't want that anyone should force entry of the Army into the house of the common man in search of militants, with our women running for shelter... I warn you beforehand, so that tomorrow you cannot say that Farooq got so many people killed."

Considering what Kashmir went through from 1990 onwards, these words proved to be chillingly prophetic.

The audience, however, cut his speech short by shouting at him that they had come to pray and not to hear political

speeches — quite a change from the time when the symbol of Kashmiri Muslim political ambition, Sheikh Abdullah, used to address crowds at the Hazratbal shrine. People, perhaps, felt that Farooq was going on the offensive because bomb blasts had become an everyday phenomenon in Kashmir.

His friend, IAS officer Ashok Jaitly, asked Farooq the next day how the speech had gone. On hearing Farooq's reply, Jaitly noted: "People are being very critical".

"I know they're being critical, but I had to say what I had to say," Farooq replied.

"What was the response?"

"Very hostile."

"What do you mean?"

"I could see the anger in the eyes of the people there, particularly the youngsters."

"Why were they angry?" Jaitly asked him.

"They see me as a stooge of Delhi."

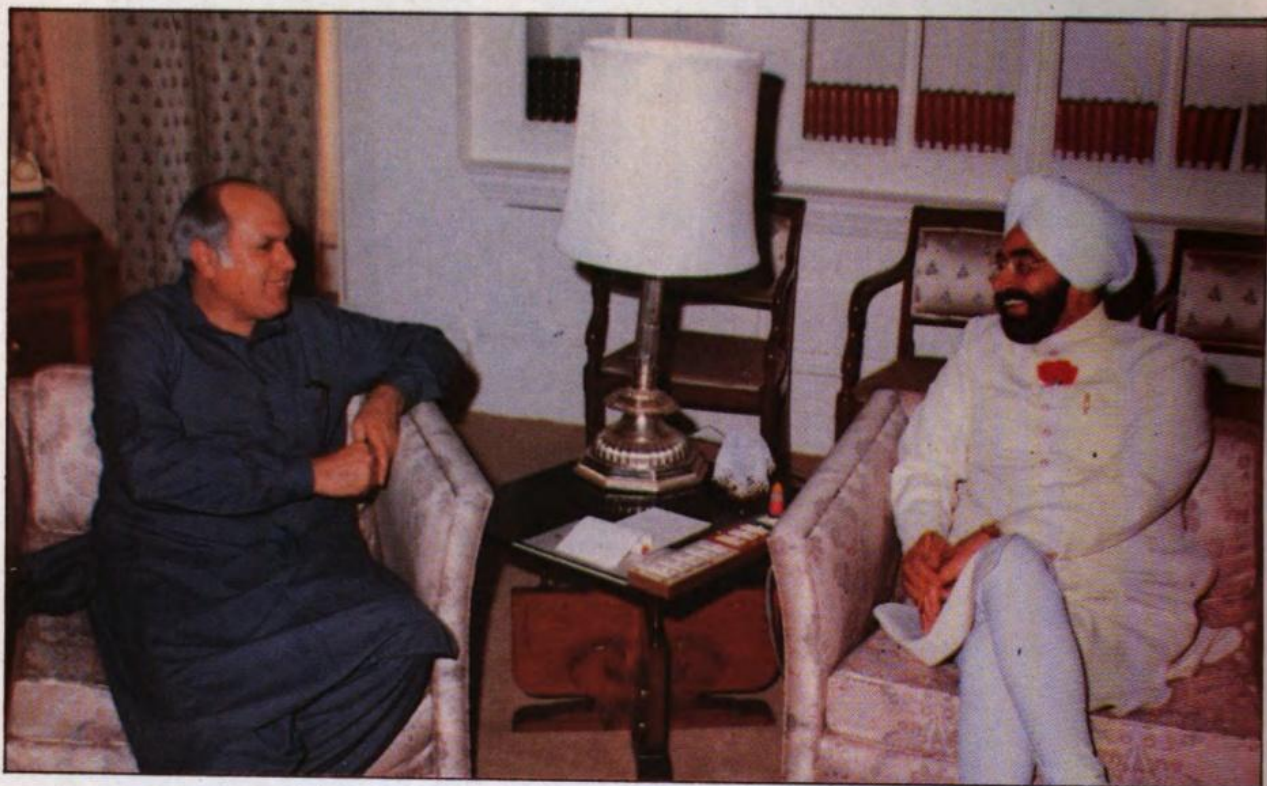
Farooq's second government did not get off the ground from the very beginning. Mufti Mohammad Sayeed has attributed this reason to the fact that Farooq and Rajiv, when coming to their political understanding, did not "prepare" their respective parties' rank and file. Ironically, Farooq maintained that the accord was only possible because it was a one-to-one deal and the rank and file were not consulted.

The first disaster concerned the Darbar move, i.e., the shifting of the state capital from Srinagar to Jammu for the winter, and back to Srinagar for the summer. Six months after coming to power, in October 1987, Farooq announced that the Darbar move would be curtailed as part of an austerity drive by the state. On paper it seemed like a fair enough decision, to have some departments permanently based in Jammu, others in Srinagar, and still other departments like industries with separate offices in both Jammu and Srinagar.

Some of the ministers would be permanently based in either city, while the Chief Minister and a few other ministers would move between the two places. This way, it was felt



Farooq and his mother along with members of his first cabinet in Srinagar (1983)



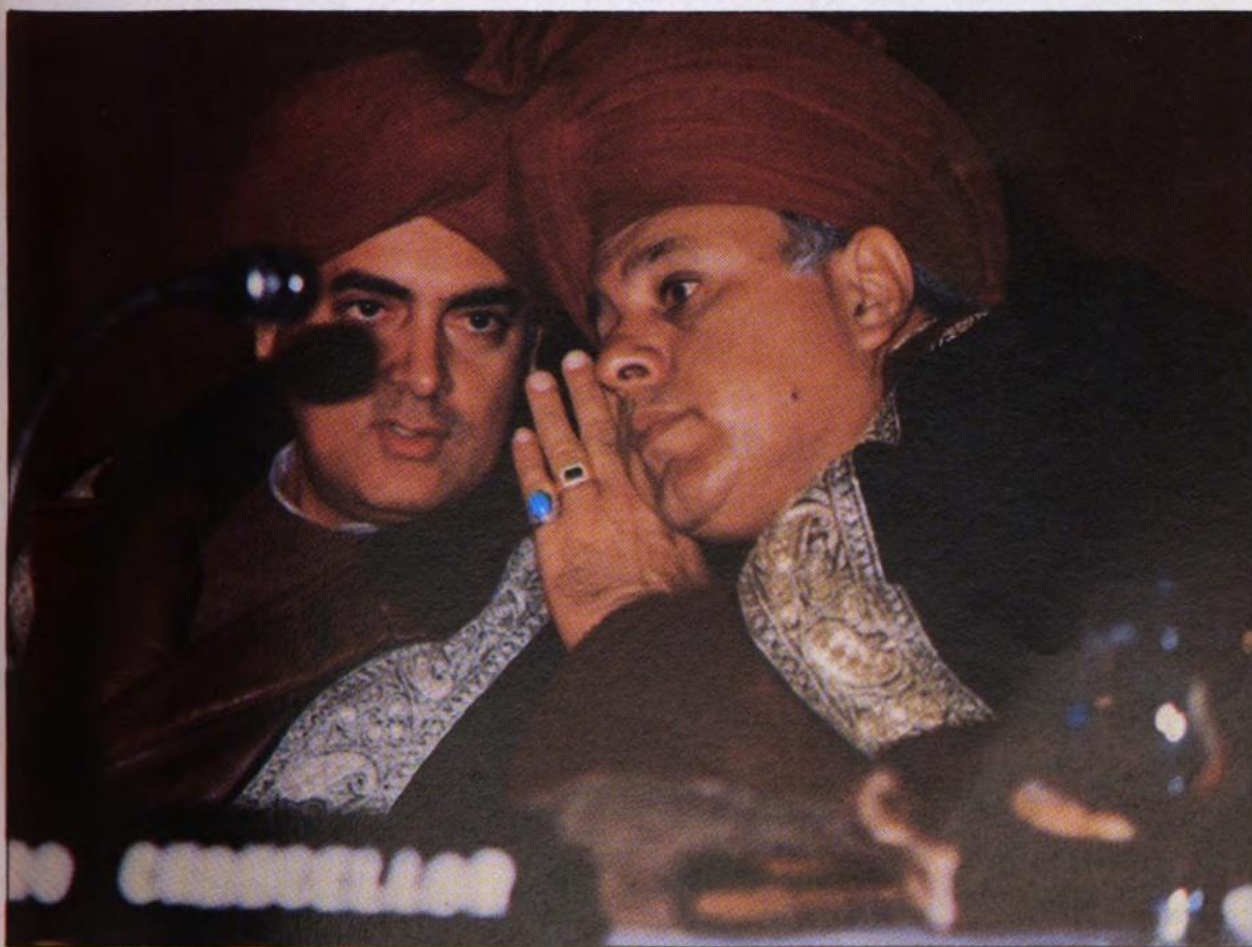
Enjoying a joke: Farooq with President Zail Singh at Rashtrapati Bhavan



Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah receiving President R. Venkataraman in Srinagar June 1999



The politics of succession: Sheikh Abdullah "anoints" his son Farooq as President of the National Conference (21 August 1981)



Two heads are better than one: PM Rajiv Gandhi and newly restored CM Farooq Abdullah (Srinagar, December 1986)



Farooq Abdullah and Rajiv Gandhi with their respective families holidaying at Gulmarg (1986)



In a relaxed mood: Farooq and Molly (1995)

that the political leadership could be responsive to Srinagar's winter problems such as shortage of food and fuel, as well as Jammu's summer problems, such as water scarcity. None of the facilities would get squandered, and the exchequer would save Rs. 8 to 10 crores annually.

It was a bad decision.

Firstly, it was proposed by bureaucrats from the Valley, the main force being future Chief Secretary, Sheikh Ghulam Rasool, who told Farooq that eventually Srinagar was the capital of the state, and this fact had to be asserted. They added that it would strengthen him in Kashmir, but they overlooked the fact that he would be alienating the Jammu region of the state.

However, the cabinet approved this decision and even Rajiv thought it was a good idea, although he did tell Farooq's officials that it was imperative that the J&K state government educate the people on the issue, the way the Centre was enlightening the people about its new education policy.

When the decision was announced publicly, however, it was a major disaster. The Bar Association in Jammu led an agitation that lasted 22 days. The Bharatiya Janata Party leader L.K. Advani stated that this decision was a precursor to dividing the state. The reaction of Jammu hardened attitudes in the Valley. The Srinagar Bar Association took out a procession to demand that Srinagar be made the permanent capital.

In the end, it was Union Home Minister Buta Singh who rushed to Srinagar and ordered the withdrawal of the offending order. This added insult to injury, for Jammu scoffed at Farooq and Kashmir felt that he had caved in. The Chief Minister lost face, to both sides.

The root of the problem was the lack of political rapport at the rank and file level: the Congress, which was stronger in Jammu, did not prepare the people for the decision and Farooq blamed it for lack of support on this move.

Apart from this disaster, nothing else seemed to work well either. The alliance, instead of speeding things up, seemed to slow them down. The power projects did not get inaugurated, and, in the meantime, the state was promised that the Russians were being asked to build 400 KV transmission lines, connecting J&K to India's northern power grid, so that the electricity problems would get solved and the process of industrialisation could take off. That never happened, however, though the state did get an expensive power-manufacturing machine called the gas turbine, which, unfortunately, proved too expensive to operate.

This time around, Farooq even went to the Planning Commission, got an earful, but was constrained to keep silent about Centre-state relations in order to honour the alliance.

Even the Finance Commission Chairman, N.K.P. Salve, on a visit to Srinagar on 23 May 1988, censured the state government for the "grave administrative lapses and inertia" which were responsible for the prevailing "fiscal indiscipline" in J&K. Salve pointed out that the state had incurred a heavy debt liability and landed itself in a "debt trap", and that it was showing no inclination for mobilising its own resources or creating its own fiscal assets.

The Finance Commission lambasted the gross failure of the administration in recovery of tax arrears, as well as the diversion of plan funds to meet the revenue deficit in the state budget. Affluent sections, it was pointed out, were not being taxed, and the prescribed charges for services and amenities rendered to consumers were not being realised.

Salve also chastised the state for the indiscriminate felling of trees, and declared that the encroachment on the Dal Lake must stop if J&K was to be saved from denudation of natural assets. Most major bridges, he pointed out, were old wooden structures, unsafe for vehicular traffic and serious impediments in the promotion of economic and development activities since disruption of transport and communication was the greatest bottleneck. Salve estimated that the total

amount needed to repair the bridges was about Rs. 50 crore, an amount which, he felt, the state could have easily raised over five years.

The Chairman also pointed out that the per capita plan allocation for J&K, at Rs. 2000, was the highest for any state; his own home state of Maharashtra had a per capita plan allocation that was half that amount.

So what did Farooq do?

Two weeks later, he raised the power tariff and the price of mutton. There was a complete strike in Srinagar on 9 June 1988, and the following day saw the start of violent demonstrations that lasted a week. Six persons were killed in police firings, and when Farooq tried to explain that J&K was purchasing power at 82 paise per unit but supplying it at 28 paise per unit, angry youth defaced his photographs and posters all over Srinagar. Farooq angrily threatened to further raise the tariff, and they burnt down the Zainakadal bridge. Finally, it was Farooq who had to recapitulate.

Rajiv Gandhi did not help Farooq at all during these crises. Although known to be a decisive man, the advice Rajiv Gandhi got on Kashmir, from people like M.L. Fotedar (Mufti Mohammad Sayeed had left Rajiv's Cabinet on 14 July 1987, soon after the rigged elections, in protest against the "mishandling of the J&K policy", and Arun Nehru had already joined V.P. Singh's Jan Morcha), did a lot to irritate relations between the two.

For instance, Rajiv and Farooq came to an agreement that an NC man would become the Speaker of the new Assembly. Farooq finalised the list of other ministers at the Prime Minister's office in Parliament, and he left for the airport to catch a plane to Jammu. At the airport, however, there was a message for him to return to Parliament as a few other matters needed to be finalised. While Farooq was on his way to the airport, some of the "Kashmir specialists" had apparently persuaded Rajiv Gandhi to have the Speaker on his own side, just as a precautionary measure for the future.

The minute Rajiv Gandhi expressed this desire, Farooq's heart sank. He knew that relations between Delhi and Srinagar were back to square one, despite the existence of an alliance.

With the passage of time came more difficulties. Many a time Farooq would go to the capital for an appointment, and would have to wait for days to see Rajiv Gandhi. Farooq felt affronted that he was being treated with such little respect, but there was precious little he could do about it. The irony of the situation was that when Farooq would return to J&K, he would have to face criticism from Congress MLAs, who complained that his being absent for four to five days at a time brought administrative working to a grinding halt!

One decision that was adversely affected by this non-functional relationship related to the *madrasas* (Islamic religious schools) in J&K. Farooq wanted to put an end to them because he was afraid that, one day, fundamentalist education would pit children of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a pro-Hindu organisation) schools against the children of the *madrasas*. The NC felt that these religious institutions should be brought under the control of the state, or their influence on the people should be reduced as much as possible, for they would ultimately wean people away from the basic NC ideology of secularism.

A large number of discussions took place, but when the state asked Union Home Minister Buta Singh, in April 1989, for finances to take over the *madrasas*, none was forthcoming. Soon after it became too late to do anything.

Even matters like cabinet reshuffles became major incidents between Rajiv Gandhi and Farooq. There was the time when Girdhari Lal Dogra, an MP in Delhi, had to be inducted into the state cabinet; Farooq told Rajiv Gandhi that it would not work, for Dogra was not a popular person. Rajiv Gandhi and his adviser on Kashmir matters, Rajesh Pilot, then decided to keep the matter totally confidential. It was agreed

that no one would know about it except the three of them, and the man to be sworn in.

Farooq was asked which date would be best for the swearing-in ceremony. He replied that any day of the coming Navratra (nine-day festival for goddess Durga) would be suitable. He returned to J&K and informed Governor Jagmohan about the developments. As it happened, Rajiv Gandhi and Rajesh Pilot chose the first Navratra. Farooq was away in Doda district, when he got a call from Rajiv Gandhi on the day selected for the ceremony. Dogra was supposed to arrive in Srinagar, by a special aircraft, by about 4.30 p.m. Farooq, on the basis of this information, organised the swearing-in ceremony for 5.30 p.m. and despatched his secretary to see Jagmohan in Srinagar, to let him know what was happening, and to ask him to organise a tea at the Raj Bhavan.

In Doda district, Farooq was still at a remote village called Bharat, where he received a message that the induction of Dogra had been called off. The Chief Minister became frantic. Here he was in a remote corner of a backward district, and he had to urgently get a message through to the Governor. When he finally managed to do so, it was too late. The Chief Justice and other guests had arrived, and when Farooq reached Raj Bhavan, it was obvious to everyone that a swearing-in was to take place. Of course, the fact it never did was a big setback, not only to the alliance, but also to Dogra, who died of a heart attack soon after.

Another reshuffle that ruffled feathers was the state cabinet expansion in April 1989. Delhi told Farooq that a list of people who were to be inducted from the Congress party would be sent to him. He should, in the meantime, organise a date and prepare his own people who were also to be sworn in. So on 27 April, Farooq and his colleagues went to Raj Bhavan, and with Governor Jagmohan waited for the Congress list and MLAs to arrive.

Around 4.30 p.m., they got word from Delhi that the aircraft was just about to leave. By 5.30 p.m., there was still no sign of it. Finally, Farooq decided to swear in four of the NC legislators.

At midnight, Farooq got a call from Jagmohan, who said that Delhi was livid that Farooq had gone ahead and sworn in his own men without waiting for the Congress candidates. The Chief Minister replied that it did not matter as they could be sworn in a day later. He could not have waited any longer and lost any more credibility. As it was, he had lost enough of it. It was high time, Farooq added in anger, that Delhi realised that he could take decisions on his own, even if the Congress could not.

Later, Buta Singh phoned Farooq. "You have sworn them in", he said. Farooq lost his temper. "Of course, I've sworn them in", he fumed. "I'm not your slave; I'm not a Congress Chief Minister whom you can browbeat or push into a corner. I am National Conference and I've taken enough." Farooq's strong reaction shook things up.

Subsequently, Mohammad Shafi Qureshi, the state Congress chief, and Ghulam Nabi Azad went to Farooq's official residence and handed him a list of 14 people to be inducted. Farooq was shocked. How could he have a ministry of 40 people in an Assembly of 76? This would be a huge burden on a small state like J&K. Azad tittered and insisted that the Chief Minister somehow manage it. On 30 April, 11 Congressmen were sworn into Farooq's ministry.

Farooq had another run-in with Shafi Qureshi towards the end of September 1989, during a cultural festival that was organised by a national daily newspaper in the Valley amidst almost daily bombings and hartals. Flautist Hari Prasad Chaurasia performed in Pahalgam; danseuse Yamini Krishnamurthy performed at the sun temple in Martand, south Kashmir; and the Dagar brothers sang at Hari Mahal.

Shafi Qureshi had fixed up an appointment with Farooq but the latter was late for it: he was busy listening to the

Dagar brothers, though he admits "he didn't understand their music". Qureshi waited in Farooq's office, while the Chief Minister sat quietly at Hari Mahal till the show finished, because "you can't tell classical singers that you have to leave in the middle of a performance because you have an appointment to keep".

When Farooq returned, Qureshi was very polite, but after he left, Farooq's secretary said that the state Congress chief had been extremely upset and rude, and had gone to the extent of saying that he could have called Delhi and got Farooq dismissed right there and then. The Chief Minister gnashed his teeth and berated his secretary for not informing him of this while Shafi Qureshi was still around because then he would have "thrown him out, lock, stock and barrel".

There is an instance where the Congress did a great disservice to J&K to further its own political ends even while the armed movement was building up. In August 1989, Union Deputy Minister P. Namgyal, of Ladakh, started the Buddhist Action Committee's agitation.

Farooq went to Rajiv Gandhi. "It is strange", he told him, "that, on one hand, we have to fight elements who want to destabilise the state and the region, while on the other hand, I have to fight my own people, who are being instigated by people in your government." The Chief Minister was not against giving the Buddhists the status of Scheduled Tribes (ST), but he felt that it was something "that Parliament should decide about". In fact, Farooq requested the ST status for people in Doda, Rajouri, Poonch, Uri, Kangan, and other backward hilly areas in the state.

This request fell on deaf ears. Farooq also asked for 29 companies of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), but he was told that the Centre had no forces to spare (ironically, J&K now gets as much as it wants in terms of security forces). As a consequence, Farooq had to send extra state police forces to Ladakh to quell the agitation, at a time when they were most needed in the Valley.

Later, when Rajiv Gandhi lost power (after the November 1989 general elections) and Farooq met him at his residence, 10, Janpath, New Delhi, Namgyal dropped by, and Rajiv, for the first time that Farooq had seen, lost his temper. He shouted at Namgyal and told him, in no uncertain terms, that he should not have launched that agitation, particularly while fighting a common enemy. Namgyal muttered some denials, but Rajiv Gandhi was infuriated: "Don't no sir me," he told Namgyal. "You were behind all that, and I had warned you more than once to stop it."

Besides the alliance failing to take off, Farooq was also stuck with a ministry in which many individuals were known to be corrupt. Being a small state, it was difficult for Farooq to drop a few ministers without unpleasant consequences (unlike in Bihar or UP, for instance), but it did not add to his prestige that his Forest Minister could openly boast of the money he had collected for the "party leadership".

Of course, there were ministers who were of a high calibre too, like P.L. Handoo, Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah, Mohammad Shafi Uri and A.R. Rather. Ghulam Rasool Kar was one man who could not be kept down at a cabinet meeting. As these ministers were intellectually superior to Farooq, he could not conduct his cabinet meetings in an authoritative fashion.

Compounding the problem of political drift was the administrative drift. Mehmood-ur Rehman, who had been such an efficient Principal Secretary during Farooq's first tenure, became too powerful, and had to be transferred to look after the industries department in 1989. Farooq's Chief Secretaries — B.K. Goswami and then Moosa Raza — on the other hand, were weak, as was his Director-General of Police, Ghulam Jilani Pandit.

Although both Goswami and Raza were competent bureaucrats, they were from outside the state. Thus, they totally misunderstood the situation, even though both were knowledgeable, learned, well-read, erudite and thorough

gentlemen. Raza, for instance, instead of concentrating on the causes of disaffection of youth, which had become evident in 1989, focussed on development, on the city of Srinagar, on buildings, bridges — aspects which were necessary but not vital. He did not understand the psyche of the people he was administering.

Perhaps this had something to do with the fact that Raza was chosen by Delhi. Farooq had been unable to decide who he wanted as his chief bureaucrat, and his drift was symbolic of the larger drift that affected both him and his administration in 1989. He left the choice of Chief Secretary to New Delhi, which, for any Chief Minister, is unheard of. No IAS officer from the J&K cadre was acceptable. The senior men were Ashok Jaitly and R.K. Takkar, and while one was unacceptable to the Congress, the other was unacceptable to Farooq. Hence, a bureaucrat close to him suggested the name of Zafar Saifullah (who was to later become the Union Cabinet Secretary), but Delhi decided on Moosa Raza, who had established a good record and reputation.

But Moosa Raza was a bad choice, and although he was able to put an end to Mehmood-ur Rehman's "parallel centre of power", he was unable to give Farooq Abdullah the support a Chief Minister needed on the administrative side.

As a consequence, Farooq's administrative weakness — being unable to study files in depth — which had earlier been compensated by good civil servants, caused him problems. This drawback paralysed him politically too, for when he had had effective bureaucrats, he had been able to concentrate better on his strengths as a politician.

As the situation deteriorated before his eyes in 1989, Farooq found himself unable to do anything to stem the rot. He should have changed the DGP, Ghulam Jilani Pandit, and, despite the advice of his close friends to do it, Farooq was simply paralysed by indecision.

Formerly, a competent DIG in charge of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Pandit as the police chief

was very weak and totally ineffective, unable to get the local police to function, or to reorganise and improve the intelligence set-up. The situation deteriorated by the day, yet Farooq was unable to get rid of a man whom he had personally never felt comfortable with. (Pandit was in the habit of greeting his Chief Minister with complaints every morning, and that was something that Farooq disliked.)

Unfortunately, the state police chief was proving to be ineffective at a time when violence was on the rise. There was a spurt of violence in the Valley around the time that General Zia-ul Haq died, on 17 August 1988, in a plane crash. (General Akhtar also died in that crash.) There had already been a round of violence two days earlier, on India's Independence Day, and before it could subside, the death of the Pakistan President escalated it.

A month later, on 18 September, the first major incident took place.

It was a quiet evening at the Raj Bagh residence of J&K Deputy Inspector General of Police, Ali Mohammad Wattali. Wattali had been instrumental in the recovery of the first AK-47s, Russian made Kalashnikov rifles, from militants in north Kashmir, a few months earlier, during the summer of 1988. This was one reason why Ajaz Ahmad Dar and four other armed militants decided to attack the DIG.

They chose a time late in the evening (11.30 p.m.) to carry out their plan. Dar and his associates quietly cut the telephone cables to Wattali's house. They then approached the sentry on duty and asked to see the DIG.

The sentry said it was too late to meet the police officer, but Dar and his associates did not turn away. They argued with the sentry, and soon there was an altercation. The militants fired from a weapon resembling an AK-47.

In the ensuing shoot-out, Dar was killed. His associates escaped in the darkness, and the alarm that filled the air was

perhaps also a battle cry that the war with the militants had begun. And although Wattali had escaped unharmed, a deep disquiet descended on members of the J&K police force.

Ajaz Dar was one of the first militants who had reportedly crossed over to "Azad Kashmir" to acquire training from the Pakistan Army. On his first death anniversary, Srinagar newspapers would publish his photograph taken at the time of the 1987 Assembly elections. It showed him carrying a gun; he was apparently a bodyguard of MUF candidate Mohammad Yusuf Shah.

Five days later, masked motorcycle-borne militants fired an AK-47 at N.K. Ganjoo, the judge who had first tried Maqbool Butt. He escaped alive. News about such exchanges of gunfire was slowly starting to appear on the front pages of local newspapers with alarming regularity.

The Chief Minister was not blind to what was going on. A few days after Zia's death, Farooq remarked to officers at the Northern Command Civil and Military Liaison that Pakistan was behind the violence in Srinagar. A month later he made a statement to the *Kashmir Times* that Pakistan was behind the sudden spurt of terrorist activity, aimed at projecting the Kashmir issue in international fora. In October, he told the IB's (Intelligence Bureau) centenary celebration gathering in Srinagar that Pakistan was bent upon engineering trouble in J&K.

Farooq felt embattled. Apart from the escalating violence, he also had to face criticism from all quarters. A.R. Kabli, his party's MP, remarked that Farooq's government was "the worst government that J&K has ever had in its history". G.M. Shah demanded the dismissal of Farooq: "He is a mental case and needs to be referred to a psychoanalyst," Shah said. "He does not have control over the administration." They were perhaps incensed at the fact that Farooq went off to Singapore and Australia, with Molly, to promote tourism, while J&K slid towards anarchy.

In February 1989, Salman Rushdie's book, *The Satanic Verses*, caused an uproar around the world, and it provided a focus for the growing violence in J&K. (The book was banned in India.) Grenade attacks and mob violence in Srinagar prompted Farooq, addressing the Assembly in Jammu, to make another startling (in hindsight) statement: that Rajiv Gandhi had warned him that Afghan arms would soon find their way to J&K. He added that it was now obvious that the violence was the handiwork of fundamentalists financed by foreign forces.

The burqa-clad women of the Dukhtaran-e-Millat made their appearance in March, alleging that the World Women's Day function, where they were not allowed to speak, was a "Westernised" show. Their demonstration was yet another sign of the times.

At the same time, Farooq was trying to persuade youngsters to give up militancy, by promising leniency and employment. But by now the whole atmosphere had changed; it was far too late for such cosmetic changes.

On 4 April, Anantnag became the centre of violence after Ghulam Mohammad Shah, the father of Shabir Shah and MUF MLA Mohammad Syed Shah, suffered a cerebrovascular attack while in police custody (he had been taken in after stone pelters had rushed into his house). He went into a coma and died later that night. Cabinet Minister P.L. Handoo's house in Anantnag was set on fire and pitched battles took place in Anantnag and Srinagar. The Army had to be called out in Anantnag.

In this particular case, while the Valley was shaken by disturbances, Farooq Abdullah was playing golf and enjoying a cultural evening in Udhampur with senior Army officials of the Northern Command. He reportedly told a person who brought him the latest news not to disturb him and he remarked to the Udhampur Deputy Commissioner that "this happens... enjoy the game and forget everything else".

Farooq later dismissed this incident as unimportant, and pointed out that he had been doing an important job in liaising with the Army, particularly since the armed forces had a major role to play in J&K. The Army also provided medical assistance in remote areas. (Farooq points out that he is the only Chief Minister who has visited Siachen a handful of times.) So, to him, playing golf with the Army top brass was indeed very important.

Two days later, the violence was still continuing. Newspapers reported a heavy exchange of gunfire in Safakadal where over 200 rounds of ammunition were fired. The militants were identified as Abdul Hamid Sheikh and Yasin Malik. Farooq, meanwhile, was still liaising with the Army at the golf course in Nagrota, Jammu. The violence subsided only after heavy rains lashed the Valley.

Delhi conveyed its ire to the state government at the way militancy was being handled. Farooq, again uncannily, told prominent citizens in Srinagar on 9 April, that a "virtual war with Pakistan" was underway, and what was visible was "just the tip of the iceberg". The next day he told some local citizens at a meeting in connection with tourism that he would "raze Srinagar to the ground to ferret out terrorists."

At times Farooq was overwhelmed, and would say things like: "I am not like my father... he used to recite the Quran before you and shifted his political stand from time to time... I am born of an English mother (a casual reference to her mixed parentage), I have an English wife, I spent a good part of my life among Englishmen. My upbringing took shape in English environments." Such incoherence was symbolic perhaps that as things were slipping out of his hand, Farooq chose to deny his Kashmiri Muslim identity; he was forfeiting his right to be the political leader.

Meanwhile, Jagmohan's term expired, and in July 1989, the new Governor who took over was the retired Army chief K.V. Krishna Rao, who was yet another in a series of father-figures for Farooq. Again Farooq talked in terms of

persuading militants to join the mainstream, because “unlike in China, where they shoot people, we in India talk to people”.

Another round of violence broke out and, on 8 August, the JKLF asked the NC’s office-bearers to quit or face severe action. Frustrated, Farooq, in a speech three days later, called upon India to hit targets in Pakistan, and “retaliate as Israel was doing with the Arabs”.

The JKLF carried out their threat on 21 August, when they shot the NC Zainakadal block President, Mohammad Yusuf Halwai. The victim, who ran a wood-carving shop and lived in Khankah *mohalla*, was walking between Kalashpora and Malaratta at around 9.20 a.m. when militants on a motorcycle pumped three bullets into him: in his neck, thigh and abdomen. The militants stopped and wrapped a cloth around Halwai’s body; on the cloth were the letters KLF. No one dared to even touch the body till the police arrived 30 minutes later.

In a knee-jerk reaction, the state government introduced a Draconian Press Bill, aimed at “controlling” news reporting of incidents and activities relating to terrorism. By August and September, Farooq was no longer attracting crowds at his meetings. Things had slipped out of his hands, and on 14 September, militants struck again, killing prominent lawyer and BJP leader, Tikka Lal Taploo, at the Kashmiri Pandit-dominated Habbakadal. The militants had apparently studied his daily routine, and killed him during his morning walk to the local bus stand.

The authorities made a breakthrough with the arrest of Shabir Ahmed Shah on 28 September in what was rumoured to be an IB operation near Ramban. Shah was said to be on his way over to Pakistan via the Rajouri-Poonch sector. This single arrest, however, could not stem the tide that was threatening to overwhelm the state. Firings, bombings and arson were the order of the day.

As Farooq withdrew, the militants occupied centre-stage. In October, Javed Ahmed Mir alias Nalka and Mushtaq Latram addressed crowds at Idgah; Farooq Rehmani, accused of hobnobbing with the Centre, made way for the incarcerated Shabir Shah to take over as Chairman of the People's League; and a massive Eid procession was led by Shakeel Ahmed Bakshi of the Islamic Students' League.

In an interview to *Kashmir Times* on 20 October, Farooq said that he was willing to talk to militants provided the basic questions (such as Kashmir's remaining a part of India) were not sought to be reopened, and accession was accepted as non-negotiable. Nobody paid too much attention to his statements, however. He had long lost his relevance in state politics.

Maqbool Butt was finally "avenged" on 4 November. The 72-year-old retired judge, N.K. Ganjoo, was gunned down on Hari Singh High Street. His body lay on the ground for 15 minutes as people panicked and ran helter-skelter, while shopkeepers downed their shutters.

In the midst of all this, Rajiv Gandhi, who was coming to the end of his term, recommended that the country go to the polls to elect a new Parliament. The general elections were announced, and Shabir Shah asked the people to boycott the polls, scheduled for 22 November 1989. Not surprisingly, the people responded to the boycott call; hardly anybody turned up in the urban centres, and both Anantnag and Baramulla reported a total turnout of only 2 per cent of the electorate. The JKLF interpreted this to mean that the people were in favour of that long-awaited plebiscite.

During the three weeks preceding the elections, Farooq, who had long before seen the writing on the wall, went into a deep depression, according to a confidant. He apparently stayed in his residence, brooding, and refused to meet anyone connected with administrative work.

Farooq had seen the drift in his government, and the change in the responses of the people. He felt alone, and

unsupported. Many of his colleagues blamed him and the 1986 accord. For his part, he felt let down by circumstances: the Army, which should have been at the border preventing the youth from going to "Azad Kashmir" to get training in Pakistan, had been diverted to the fighting in Jaffna, Sri Lanka; the Punjab situation had an adverse fallout as well. In general, he felt the Centre had not backed him when needed most.

On a personal level, Farooq felt hemmed in from all sides. He became paranoid about what his own friends and colleagues were saying about him. "Instead of helping me out, they were adding to my woes," he recalled five years later.

Farooq later claimed that it was not depression but an unstable blood pressure problem that took him to Houston, USA. Given the history of blood pressure problems on both sides of his family, he suspected that he had suffered a minor cardiac episode, and went for treatment to Denton Cooley's famous centre for an angiography. However, nothing was detected. He was told that it might have been a slight spasm of the coronary artery which might have caused slight changes in the ECG patterns.

At the same time, the other results, i.e., those of the general elections, had also come in: Rajiv had lost. Some journalists who met Farooq in Washington D.C. reported that he had told them that his loyalties still lay with Rajiv, whether or not he was Prime Minister.

Vishwanath Pratap Singh was sworn in as the new Prime Minister on 2 December 1989 and having decided to give the Kashmir issue priority on his agenda, he gave India its first Muslim Home Minister, who was also a Kashmiri: Mufti Mohammad Sayeed. At any other time, V.P. Singh's decision could have been momentous. At this time, however, the political leadership of Kashmiri Muslims had slipped out of the hands of the mainstream political parties (although no one else had taken control of it). Kashmiri Muslims were

unimpressed by the appointment, particularly as the candidate was seen as an out and out Delhi man, with no base in the Valley.

Contemplating life with his old adversary occupying Delhi's North Block, which houses the Home Ministry, Farooq had reached London. No sooner had his aircraft landed than he was told that Home Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's daughter, Rubaiya, had been abducted by militants.

Rubaiya's Kidnapping: Opening the Floodgates

It was a typically cold and grey winter afternoon on 8 December 1989, when 24-year-old Rubaiya Sayeed, an intern at the Lal Ded Memorial Women's Hospital, walked to the exhibition grounds bus stand to catch a private minibus to go home. She caught the bus around 3.25 p.m. and made her way to Nowgam, on the outskirts of Srinagar.

About 20 minutes later, the bus, a matador van, reached the Nowgam bypass, at which point three other passengers hijacked it at gunpoint. They stopped the bus, and told Rubaiya to get out; she was being kidnapped.

Rubaiya is said to have started shouting and abusing the boys, asking them if they did not know that she was a Kashmiri woman. Through her remarks she made it clear that she was a Muslim.

The hijackers, on the other hand, told her to stop the nonsense and shut up. They told her that they had nothing against her personally, but she was being kidnapped because of a completely political matter.

She was bundled into a blue Maruti van and driven to the outskirts of Sopore, where she was kept in the house of a government engineer, Javed Iqbal Mir, located opposite the Sopore industrial estate (where now a BSF camp stands). The kidnappers handed Rubaiya over to women activists of the Dukhtaran-e-Millat, who guarded her throughout.

Two hours later, the JKLF telephoned the Srinagar office of the *Kashmir Times*, and said that they had kidnapped the Home Minister's daughter. "She is like our own daughter and has been handed over to women volunteers of the front for safe custody," the callers added by way of reassurance. The next day, the headlines in the *Kashmir Times* described their act, the kidnapping of "an innocent Muslim girl", as a "blatant act of cowardice".

The kidnappers demanded the release of five militants: Abdul Hamid Sheikh, the JKLF area commander who had been wounded and captured by police during a shoot-out in Sargaripora (he was being kept under guard at the SMHS hospital in Soura); Ghulam Nabi Butt, the younger brother of Maqbool Butt; Noor Mohammad Kalwal; Mohammad Altaf; and Abdul Ahad Waza.

It had apparently been a well-planned operation, hatched moments after Mufti Mohammad Sayeed was sworn in as the Home Minister of India. Yasin Malik and Ashfaq Majid Wani, the leaders of the JKLF, were the brains behind the conspiracy worked out at Mushtaq Ahmed Lone's house in Chanpora. The JKLF had decided that the kidnapping of the Home Minister's daughter would create a sensation, and they acted with alacrity to implement their plans. Every step — from the moment they began to keep a watch on Rubaiya, to track her every movement, even within the hospital, to the moment she was handed over to the

Dukhtaran-e-Millat — was planned and executed with precision.

Farooq (who had just arrived in London) heard the news of the kidnapping from Ashok Jaitly, who was in Jammu monitoring the action, since Chief Secretary Moosa Raza had gone to Delhi that day. As soon as he told Farooq what had happened, the Chief Minister exclaimed in disgust: "Hell with it... let them handle it."

Jaitly told him that he had better return.

"No, I'm not coming, let them handle it."

"Are you crazy? You've got to be here," Jaitly said. "Take the first flight out."

"No, I'll come after two or three days. I've got some other things to take care of."

Jaitly was exasperated. "Will you take the first flight and come", he repeated. "Please stop over in Delhi, see the Prime Minister, and then come here."

Farooq finally agreed. He took the first flight out and upon reaching Delhi met Mufti Mohammad Sayeed at his residence. Arun Nehru was also there, and they took him to meet the Prime Minister, V.P. Singh. They asked the Chief Minister whether Rubaiya's freedom could be secured by the release of the five militants. Farooq told them that he could not take that decision there in Delhi; he would have to go to Srinagar, talk to his cabinet colleagues and officers, and then decide what the position was and what action should be taken.

Farooq returned to Srinagar and met his ministerial colleagues who had flown in from Jammu, as also the IB officer in charge of the state, and Chief Secretary Raza. The IB officer and Raza were doing the negotiating, and after some discussion, Farooq felt that nobody should be released. Although the JKLF had, on 9 December, given a deadline of 11 December, 7 p.m. for their demands to be met, failing which they would kill Rubaiya, Farooq knew that the entire kidnapping went against everything that Kashmiris stood for.

Public pressure, he was sure, would force them to eventually release the girl.

Already, by 10 December, pressure was building up, but not so much from within Kashmir as from outside. Besides Mirwaiz Moulvi Farooq's public appeal to the JKLF to release Rubaiya, there was little sorrow expressed. Most of the statements condemning the act came from Muslims in other parts of India, such as Salahuddin Owaisi and Rashid Masood, MPs from Hyderabad and UP and from Asad Madani, the President of the Jamaat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind.

The negotiators, meanwhile, had started talking to Abdul Majid Wani, whose son Ashfaq was a prominent JKLF leader and one of the brains behind the kidnapping. Wani was a government servant, who was introduced to the government's negotiators by the *Kashmir Times'* correspondent Zafar Mehraj, who himself had many contacts in the JKLF.

Abdul Majid Wani was extremely apologetic about the entire incident. "My son is not a bad boy," he told the negotiators. "These boys, I've known them all for years, none of them are bad. They have made a mistake", he said, and "they have realised it."

But now they had to save face, and this could be done if only one person was released: Abdul Hamid Sheikh. He gave three options: first, that Hamid could be taken to the border with Pakistan at Uri, where the soldiers could be asked to relax their vigil for three hours so that he could cross the border and go across to "Azad Kashmir". If that was not possible, then he could be put on a plane to Iran. Lastly, he could be sent to England.

Suddenly, Wani grabbed Raza's wrist: "Even if you don't release anybody," he said, "they will free the girl."

When Raza and the IB official told Farooq about the scaled down demands, the Chief Minister could almost taste victory. He replied that none of the options was acceptable. "If Hamid Sheikh wants treatment, we can send him to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi,

the best medical institute in India," Farooq said. If his treatment could not be carried out there, he added, then they would send him abroad, but only if absolutely necessary.

To Farooq it appeared as if he was succeeding. Pressure, however, kept building up from Delhi: minister after minister, starting with the Prime Minister, kept calling him. Something must be done, they insisted. Most of them felt all five boys should be released. Farooq tried to explain that the situation in Srinagar, on the ground, was very different. If the government gave in to their demands, he felt, it would be the last nail in the coffin of India. Henceforth, the militants would think that no government could hold them back and no one could stop them. It would set a bad precedent.

Things seemed to be going fine, and even Amanullah Khan, the Chairman of the JKLF, which had carried out the abduction, publicly asked the kidnappers not to carry out their threat to kill Rubaiya. But things suddenly changed.

A judge of the Allahabad High Court, M.L. Bhat, was brought in to negotiate by Mufti Mohammad Sayeed. According to Farooq, Bhat, while serving as a judge at the J&K High Court, had been close to the Jamaat-e-Islami. As a result, every time the state government arrested a Jammat-e-Islami (JEI) activist on sedition, a habeas corpus petition would be filed by JEI lawyer-activist, Mian Altaf Qayoom, in Bhat's court, and the culprit would be instantly released.

When the pattern of Bhat's court releasing every JEI activist was established and it became clear what was happening, Farooq asked Rajiv to shift Bhat from J&K. "Corrupt" was a word used to describe Bhat. With great difficulty, he was somehow sent to the Allahabad High Court. Thinking that his contacts with the Jamaat-e-Islami would expedite the release of his daughter, a desperate Home Minister roped Bhat in as an interlocutor.

Bhat met Farooq at the Chief Minister's office and told him that he was in negotiation with Mian Qayoom. He added that he had come to J&K armed with the Home Minister's

orders that all five of the prisoners would be released, and that the state government had no choice but to comply.

This knocked the bottom out of Raza's and the IB's case. The militants, on hearing what the Home Minister had said, changed their strategy. Abdul Majid Wani instantly disappeared and all efforts by the government to trace him failed. When the negotiators tried to reach him through a contact, they were told that as orders from Delhi had already come, there was no need for him to do the negotiating.

Bhat, meanwhile, told Farooq that there was no need to worry, and he would do the needful as Rubaiya was like his own daughter. Farooq retaliated: "But the honour of the nation is at stake." Even if his own daughter were in the same place, Farooq clarified, he would not blink an eyelid at taking the same decision as he was taking that moment, i.e., not to release the boys. He vented his fury at Bhat, who he was sure had already let the boys know that he had got orders from Delhi to release the prisoners. "Whose orders?" Farooq asked infuriated, "I am the man who has to look after law and order here, not Delhi. I'm not going to give in."

And suddenly it was the same old story: Farooq versus Delhi. Despite the changes in characters and despite the unique circumstances of the case, the larger political trend remained the same: Delhi dealing with Srinagar in a ham-handed fashion, refusing the local government the autonomy of action that was rightfully its own. The last time it had happened, with respect to the 1986 accord — where Srinagar was compelled to share power (Farooq sharing the blame for yielding to the historical coercion) with Delhi — it had turned the people anti-Farooq and anti-Centre; Delhi was now threatening to turn the people anti-India.

Home Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed had been advised by his colleague, Energy Minister Arif Mohammad Khan, to resign the moment Rubaiya's kidnapping took place. But Mufti refused. Once he refused, it was only natural that, being the Home Minister, he would be wholly involved in

the government negotiations. In his desperation, he called Bhat and, in the words of the negotiators, that led to several unofficial channels opening up. For, after Bhat entered the picture, anyone in Srinagar who wanted to curry favour with Mufti Mohammad Sayeed telephoned him saying that he could arrange Rubaiya's early release faster than Farooq or Bhat. Mufti would naturally give them the go-ahead for talking to the militants.

Farooq's outburst at Bhat was conveyed back to the Home Minister. Bhat reported that Farooq Abdullah remained adamant, and that he was taking this opportunity to settle political scores with Mufti. Cabinet Secretary T.N. Seshan telephoned Raza, and shouted at him. "Why isn't the state government releasing the five prisoners?", he wanted to know. Farooq told Delhi that under no circumstances was he going to release those five, unless the Prime Minister of India issued specific instructions to that effect. He would then have to pay the price for whatever went wrong afterwards because Farooq did not want to be the one who would take the rap.

Early in the morning, at 1 a.m., on 13 December, Prime Minister V.P. Singh telephoned Farooq. A cabinet meeting had just concluded, he said to Farooq. "I'll be grateful if you release them," the Prime Minister told the J&K Chief Minister.

Farooq remained firm. He would only do it on the Prime Minister's command, not otherwise. Once again, Farooq reiterated that he was against releasing the prisoners because he feared the consequences. He felt that the Prime Minister should be the one to explain the matter to the nation.

Farooq went to bed. He was awakened around 4 a.m.: he was informed that two cabinet ministers — Arif Mohammad Khan and Foreign Minister I.K. Gujral — were on their way to Srinagar. They were being accompanied by the IB director M.K. Narayanan. Farooq gave orders that as soon as they landed, they were to be brought straight to his house.

Around 5.30 a.m. Farooq found the three standing outside his door, shivering in the bitter December cold. He took them to the *hamam*, which was the warmest room in the house, and Raza and the IB officer were promptly summoned to brief the ministers. The IB officer gave them the entire story.

Arif, on hearing the situation, was almost apologetic. He admitted that this was not the story they had been told in Delhi. He firmly felt that the Chief Minister's decision, not to release the prisoners, was correct.

I.K. Gujral, however, said that they had come with a specific message from the Prime Minister. They were to ensure Rubaiya's release, or they were to dismiss Farooq Abdullah as the Chief Minister.

Farooq realised that the brief was very clear: the prisoners were going to be released, no matter what. He told Raza to make a note of the Prime Minister's instructions: that the five militants were to be released, and Rubaiya freed. He detailed to the ministers what he thought would follow. One has only to pick up the newspapers of the last five-and-a-half years to know that Farooq has been proved right.

Farooq also sent a 14-page letter to Governor K.V. Krishna Rao, explaining everything that had happened in great detail, so that it would be in the gubernatorial records. A copy was forwarded to President R. Venkataraman.

At 3 p.m. the militants were released at Rajouri Kadal, in front of Mirwaiz Manzil, the headquarters of the Awami Action Committee. The crowds went wild; the euphoria was unmistakable. Women garlanded the militants, and distributed *shirni* (sugar cubes) and sang traditional Kashmiri folk songs. "Diwali" was celebrated although one could not tell if the blasts came from crackers or weaponry. JKLF flags were hoisted all over Srinagar. There was no doubt now as to who was politically leading the Kashmiri Muslims — the symbols and signs were there for all to see.

For over two hours after the militants' release, however, there was no sign of Rubaiya. Even though Javed Ahmed Mir

had telephoned the *Kashmir Times* to say that Rubaiya would be free by 6.30 p.m., "we missed many a heartbeat", according to police officer, Amar Kapoor. The militants kept her till 5.30 p.m., when she was handed over to the mediators Bhat, Qayoom, MLA Mir Mustafa and Dr. A.A. Guru (who was treating Hamid Sheikh at Soura hospital). She reached her home at Nowgam at 7.30 p.m.

This was India's first experience of a militancy-related kidnapping. The way in which it was mishandled led to an avalanche of kidnappings, not only in J&K, but all over the country.

In Punjab, militants went on a kidnapping spree that eventually included the family members of the Punjab police personnel. It became a personalised affair, and the police retaliated by kidnapping members of the families of militants.

In Assam, the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), taking their cue from J&K, kidnapped executives of the sprawling tea gardens in upper Assam, collecting more than a hundred crore rupees in ransom. Such became the situation that, at one point, entire panic-stricken families had to be evacuated from the Aviation Research Centre's (ARC) airstrip in Doomdooma. Engineers, whether Indian or foreign, were also victims: one gruesome incident in July 1991 involved a Russian engineer, whose decapitated body was later recovered from the Brahmaputra river.

It took a long time for the authorities to undo the damage. They had to start from scratch by repeatedly refusing to give in to the demands of the kidnappers, until it became clear that the Indian Home Minister's, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's, caving in in December 1989, was a thing of the past.

Season of Massacres

Kashmiri Muslims blame Jagmohan for turning a full-blown protest into a liberation movement. While some see the 20 January 1990 incident at Gaukadal as the turning point, others see the 21 March 1990 episode as the watershed, following a massacre of civilians at Lal Bazar.

Whatever the exact turning point may have been, it opened the floodgates for *azaadi* (freedom) as the new political goal to be pursued by Kashmiri Muslims. People in the Valley were following events around the world, and the repeated television transmissions of successful liberation movements in eastern Europe undoubtedly encouraged Kashmiri Muslims into believing that their dreams were close to realisation.

Yet, politics, as such, had not been channelised. No one person represented the aspirations of Kashmiri Muslims, and

the outfit that did, the JKLF, soon became the target of both India and Pakistan, neither of which wanted an independent Kashmir.

Thousands of boys started crossing over to "Azad Kashmir" to take part in Pakistan's training programmes immediately after the Rubaiya kidnapping episode. Yet, it remained militancy that could be tackled. A political structure still existed in J&K, and despite the growing helplessness, it was only at the political level that militancy could be effectively fought.

New Delhi, however, did not seem to want to fight militancy politically. This seemed to be the message when Jagmohan was again appointed the new Governor. Prime Minister V.P. Singh approved the appointment under pressure from political allies who felt that a tough stand needed to be taken by the "soft" Indian state. He agreed to the appointment of Jagmohan under the impression that the civil government would stay in place, and there would be no problem between Farooq and Jagmohan.

Jagmohan thought he could control the problem, and the fact remained that he did have a reputation as a competent administrator, though some felt that he had an anti-Muslim bias. People had praised some of the measures he had taken during the interregnum between G.M. Shah's reign and Farooq's comeback. For example, he was seen to have successfully tackled corruption in the Public Works Department, and he had put an end to the private practice of doctors employed by the government, a gesture that was truly appreciated by the people, regardless of their ideology.

Unfortunately, however, a great transformation had taken place on the ground during the seven months that Jagmohan had been away.

Farooq decided to take this opportunity to quit. He felt that Jagmohan was decidedly anti-Muslim, and things could not get better. It seemed like a repeat of 1984 all over again, added to which he knew V.P. Singh had been thinking of

dismissing him since the Rubaiya incident. For more than one reason, it was time for him to step down.

He resigned as soon as Jagmohan's appointment was made known to him. At that point, Rajiv Gandhi sent Rajesh Pilot to Jammu to ask Farooq to come to Delhi. Farooq did so. In Delhi Rajiv and Farooq had a talk. Farooq said — exactly what was on his mind — that Jagmohan's appointment was just a prelude for his dismissal and if he was going to go anyway, why wait? Farooq returned to Jammu, discussed the matter with the cabinet for nearly two-and-a-half hours, and at midnight between 18 and 19 January 1990, he quit as Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir.

"Jagmohan's earlier tenure cannot be forgotten for the way defined powers under Article 370 were encroached upon... whereby sovereign powers of the legislature of the state were curtailed on vital matters," Farooq said in a statement. "He behaved like a colonial ruler. He sought his social base from communal outfits which ultimately resulted in growth and spread of communal politics, unheard of in our state," he added, making a sweeping, and, perhaps, unfair remark.

Two people who were very excited about Jagmohan's arrival were DGP J.N. Saxena and CRPF Inspector General Joginder Singh. They were among that section of the administration which thought that Farooq's approach to militancy had been all wrong, and that now that Jagmohan was coming, he would set things right, and fight militancy on what they perceived as its own terms. Being members of the Indian Police Service, they saw things through the narrow prism of law and order. It did not perhaps occur to them that militancy was a political problem and had to be dealt with politically.

Saxena was perhaps the worst police officer the state has ever had. He was even a shade worse than Ghulam Jilani Pandit because at least Pandit had been part of the J&K police force. Saxena had been in J&K before, as a Deputy Director

in the IB, during the early 1980s. At that time he had befriended Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, then the state Congress chief.

Saxena was posted as a Joint Director at the IB headquarters in Delhi when he ran into the IB's internal politics. When the Centre was looking for a new police chief, the IB suggested his name, and Mufti swooped him up.

It was a bad choice because Saxena was a typically uptight intelligence agent: he suspected everybody. He thought that the entire J&K police comprised Pakistani agents. He was not astute enough to take a hint from his neighbour K.P.S. Gill, who had been similarly thrust upon the Punjab police, but who had gained the confidence of his officers by leading from the front. Saxena gained nobody's confidence because he trusted none of the senior police officers, choosing instead to operate through the BSF or the CRPF. The very fact that his security was drawn from the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), and not the J&K Armed Police, spoke volumes.

Having an effective police force means winning half the battle of tackling an insurgency because it is the state police which knows the nooks and crannies of the region. It has its finger on the pulse of the people, and even if it has to resort to punitive measures, the people are not as resentful as when an outside force comes in and pushes them around. (Revitalising the Punjab police was a key ingredient in ending the Khalistan movement in the 1990s.)

According to the IPS officers who were in Srinagar at that time, Saxena, unmindful of these obvious truths about policing, decided (along with Joginder Singh) to impress Jagmohan with a major crackdown. So on the night of 19 January 1990, they went to Gaukadal and rounded up about 300 persons suspected to be militants.

The new Governor, however, could not proceed up to Srinagar due to bad weather on 20 January. Saxena and Joginder Singh were in a panic. Saxena went down to Jammu to fetch the Governor. Joginder Singh tried to think of ways

of getting the 300 people off his hands, but could not. And that night, all hell broke loose.

Kashmiri Muslims claim that a procession was fired upon in Gaukadal; government officials deny that anything like that happened. That night, however, did mark a turning point. Irrespective of whether the 50-odd demonstrators died in a group, or in individual incidents, their deaths started a trend of human rights violations in the Valley.

Srinagar was transformed. The loudspeakers from mosques remained on all night, making announcements about *azaadi*. People came out on the streets, stopped cars and asked for donations. Nobody slept, preferring to participate in a carnival of demonstrations and violence against the security forces.

Jagmohan was infuriated with his officers. He ordered all but six of the detainees to be released. He later wrongly blamed Farooq for the incident. And while Jagmohan himself was not directly responsible for what took place, as a symbol of a larger political force he was, for Saxena and Joginder Singh were inspired to do what they did because they believed in the ideology that Jagmohan represented.

Violations of human rights increased under Saxena and Jagmohan, and some say that a massacre of innocent civilians in Lal Bazar on 21 March 1990 turned the population's mood from being anti-Centre to anti-India. Besides the obvious indignities and alienation resulting from human rights violations, at a deeper level, the Kashmiri Muslim identity was threatened. People felt that a policy of genocide was underway, a process that was aimed not just at eroding their identity, but at exterminating the entire race. It was no surprise, then, that two days later, when Shakeel Bakshi called for a procession to Charar-e-Sharief — the symbol of Kashmiri Muslim cultural identity, that was at the heart of their movement, their aspirations, their life — people responded enthusiastically. Lakhs thronged the roads to the *ziarat* (pilgrimage).

Farooq made up his mind to leave soon after. Nobody had listened to him — not the rulers in Delhi, nor the people in the Valley. He felt the time was right to forsake politics for family.

Farooq has always been, above everything else, a family man. He once articulated his feelings at a function in honour of the Urdu writer Mazhar Imam, at the Iqbal Academy, on 9 July 1988: "I will retire from active politics. I have a lot to attend to on the domestic front which has suffered due to my heavy political preoccupation. I am also one of those who like to pack up after some time and relax by playing golf, and being with one's family."

Farooq's family life was indeed affected by political events. His children were often upset as militants were blaring pro-*azaadi* messages at the mosque he had built just below his house. He decided to send them to school outside the state (to Himachal Pradesh).

But what hastened his decision to leave was the murder of Mirwaiz Moulvi Farooq on 21 July 1990. Although he was murdered by Hizbul Mujahideen militants because he was secretly talking to the new Minister for Kashmir Affairs, George Fernandes, Farooq Abdullah also blames Jagmohan squarely for not protecting Mirwaiz Farooq.

According to Farooq, the Mirwaiz had been under threat from the pro-Pakistan militants. He had sent Farooq a number of messages, saying that he was fighting a lone battle, and that he feared for his life. He directly requested the Home Minister to arrest him, as giving him protection would have been detrimental to his status as a religious leader, as would have been his attempt to escape from the scene. He thus requested Mufti Mohammad Sayeed to put him under house arrest.

The Home Minister requested Jagmohan a number of times to accede to the Mirwaiz's request but the house arrest never materialised. Mirwaiz Farooq was gunned down one

morning by three armed men and the Home Minister of India could only shake his head in despair.

The firing on the Mirwaiz's funeral procession, in which 56 persons died, marked the end of Jagmohan's tenure. Again, he was not directly responsible. The fault lay in Saxena's total inadequacy as a police chief. Saxena was at the Soura medical institute when the body was taken out, and he saw the size and mood of the crowd. Yet he took no precautionary measures. When the police confronted the crowd, they went berserk, and used light machine-guns, which resulted in a massacre.

Farooq figured that the same could happen to him. Clearly, he was not one to choose martyrdom for himself. He decided to leave. He asked Molly if she would like to stay in Delhi, but she said she would not be able to stand the summer heat there. "I said fine, let us say goodbye and move from home," Farooq said. It was decided they would move to England.

When she heard his decision Farooq's mother was heartbroken. Had Molly been a Kashmiri Muslim, she reflected, perhaps Farooq would have stayed closer home.

22

Return of the Prodigal Son

Farooq did not stay away long. He returned to India, and before he knew it, Delhi indicated its interest in taking political initiatives to solve its Kashmir problem.

One positive factor was that Pakistan had turned against the new champions of Kashmiri Muslim identity, and as a great irony, pro-Pakistan militants helped the Government of India in targeting and eliminating the cadres of the JKLF. For once, there was a mutuality of interests regarding Kashmir between India and Pakistan. Neither wanted an independence movement to blossom; in the long run, such a movement would pose problems for both countries.

With the removal from the scene of the people who had become the new protectors of the Kashmiri Muslim political identity, the movement for *azaadi* floundered and lost

direction. Furthermore, the then Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's refusal to allow the JKLF supporters, led by Amanullah Khan, to cross the line of control from "Azad Kashmir" into Kashmir in March 1992 brought home the reality of Pakistan's manoeuvrings to the people of the Valley.

The negative factor was that there were a series of human rights violations in the Valley which were increasingly alienating people. Large-scale massacres took place, including one in Sopore on 6 January 1993, in which 45 people were killed and a whole section of the town burnt, during a retaliatory raid by security forces, and another in Bijbehara on 22 October 1993, when 37 people demonstrating against the Army's siege of the Hazratbal shrine were gunned down by security forces.

What has hurt the Kashmiris most, however, is not so much these large-scale massacres — though they too arouse indignation — but the constant daily torture and brutality that each Kashmiri family has been subjected to since 1990. Custodial deaths are far too many to detail, although Amnesty International (whose credentials are suspect among India's elite) listed 745 such deaths in a report released in June 1995.

The number of custodial deaths in any case are only a fraction of the number of youngsters actually detained and subjected to varying kinds of third-degree interrogation. By employing such methods, Delhi managed to turn every youngster into a potential militant.

Another aspect of human rights violations which has deeply embittered the Kashmiris is the rape of many Kashmiri women by security forces. Rape is undoubtedly a criminal, inhuman, and repulsive act, and there is no justification for it. The fact remains, however, that troops sent to the Valley to fight militants have committed this atrocious act on a number of occasions. In some cases, the culprits of such crimes have been identified and punished, yet the very fact that this crime took place remains a sore point with the people of the Valley.

Similarly, the militants have also committed a number of human rights violations. As a consequence, many people have turned against the militants too. That, however, does not absolve the government from the misdeeds of its security forces. New Delhi has to come to terms with the human rights violations, since it has (and not the militants) a Kashmir "problem".

Pakistan is certainly not interested in the human rights violations of Kashmiris, and this was proved to the world in March 1994, at the United Nations Human Rights Conference in Geneva.

During this conference, Farooq was part of the Indian delegation led by Atal Behari Vajpayee which aimed at preventing the tabling of an anti-India resolution by Pakistan condemning the human rights violations in Kashmir. The fact that Farooq was a Kashmiri Muslim, that he had administered Kashmir as its democratically elected Chief Minister, that he had witnessed first-hand the history of post-1947 Kashmir by virtue of being Sheikh Abdullah's son and that he knew in detail each attempt by Pakistan to disrupt the development of Kashmir, swung things in India's favour. Pakistan had no counter to him; they did not even bring a Kashmiri Muslim along with their delegation, despite their insistence that they were the true representatives of Kashmir.

Farooq was here at his oratorical best, and on the crucial aspect of human rights violations, he charged Pakistan with having created a proxy war, noting that there never had been a war without human rights violations.

The Indian delegation was successful not only in preventing a diplomatic and political embarrassment to India but also in driving home the point to the people of the Valley (who stood at Srinagar street corners during the last days of the debate, years glued to their radios) that Pakistan did not care for them or their cultural identity, that Pakistan's motives were not only selfish but also a threat to Kashmiris in the long run.

Pakistan had threatened to introduce a resolution condemning India's abuse of human rights in Kashmir. It found, however, that not enough countries would support its resolution. If Pakistan had gone ahead and introduced it, it would have faced political embarrassment but would have proved to Kashmiris that the Valley's cause was more important than geopolitical oneupmanship. Pakistan however, did not introduce the resolution, and at no time was that country more hated in the Kashmir Valley.

Farooq returned and found his state had a new Governor, former RAW chief Girish Chandra Saxena, who had taken over after Jagmohan's departure in July 1990. Saxena was presumably sent to take on what was indisputably a war being waged by Pakistan's ISI and he not only stalemated the hardline militants, but also proved India's resilience to the world. If any country felt that Kashmir could be broken off from India during a time of political turbulence (there were three Prime Ministers during his two-and-a-half-year-long tenure), it was proved wrong by the nation's inherent stability.

At the same time, Pakistan's ISI was not the root cause of the problem, so Governor Saxena was unable to tackle the crux of the problem, which was political.

In December 1990, Farooq found that the V.P. Singh government was on its way out. Chandra Shekhar came in as PM, and asked Farooq to join his cabinet as part of a political initiative to solve the Kashmir problem.

Rajiv Gandhi was, at that time, leading the Congress in supporting Chandra Shekhar's 54-member party that was ruling India. Both he and Farooq felt that joining Chandra Shekhar's ministry would not be a good idea: Farooq would have been perceived as running away from Kashmir's politics. In fact, Chandra Shekhar needed considerable persuasion to omit Farooq's name from the list of ministers he was to submit to Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Chandra Shekhar was a man who gave the impression of wanting to solve the problem as soon as possible. Unfortunately, his tenure was not long enough.

General elections were held in May 1991. The Congress came back to power, and P.V. Narasimha Rao became the Prime Minister.

Narasimha Rao has overseen more than four years of discussions, with nothing concrete really emerging from them. He has been credited with the philosophy of letting time solve problems. He seems to be applying this philosophy to the Kashmir issue as well.

The Kashmiris themselves have begun to find the war of attrition too strenuous and the understanding has started to sink in that with neither Pakistan nor India wanting an independent Kashmir, there is perhaps little chance of this ever happening. This realisation came into focus and was consolidated during the 31-day standoff between the Army and the JKLF-led militants at the Hazratbal shrine, from 15 October to 16 November 1993.

Hazratbal has been the symbol of Kashmiri Muslim political identity since the movement began, partly because of its socio-economic-religious importance in the Valley's life, and partly because Sheikh Abdullah chose to play his politics that way. Thus, when the remnants of the battered JKLF, which had come to represent the political aspirations of Kashmiri Muslims since 1989, took refuge inside the shrine (threatening to destroy it if the authorities attempted to use force against them), and were surrounded by the Indian Army, the outcome could only be symbolic of future portents.

The Army tired the militants out, and starved them without killing them (the Indian judiciary ensured that minimum food reached the besieged militants). In a way, this strategy was a microcosm of what Delhi had done with Sheikh Abdullah from 1953 to 1975. Finally, a deal was struck: the militants walked out peacefully, the shrine was saved, the state took the militants into custody, and, finding that none had any major case against him, released them.

Once the stand-off reached this denouement, people became conscious of what they had been feeling during the

past year and a half: that *azaadi* was not a realistic dream, and that violence was certainly not the way to achieve it.

Meanwhile, Farooq had started responding to Delhi's wooing, and set preconditions for his return to politics in the Valley. He knew that the people would be angry with him and he would have to explain himself, and prove to them (not by words, but by deeds) that he was still their best bet, and the most effective political representative of Kashmiri Muslim aspirations. First, though, the ground would have to be prepared, and for that, the first step had to be a change of Governor.

The end of G.C. Saxena's tenure gave way to the return of General K.V. Krishna Rao, whom Farooq remembered as being very "constitutional". After the experience of 1984, Farooq wanted a Governor who would definitely play by the rules. Unfortunately, Krishna Rao has perhaps turned out to be the worst possible choice as far as queering the pitch for the return of politics to the Valley went. Simultaneously, his task acquired a greater urgency because of the influx of foreign mercenaries, directed by Pakistan to keep a war of attrition continuing in order to undermine the possibility of a return to peace through successful politics.

The only notable event that took place under Krishna Rao's tenure was a concerted attempt by New Delhi to curtail human rights violations. From the Hazratbal siege till the destruction of the Chrar-e-Sharief *ziarat* in May 1995, custodial deaths showed a marked decrease; curfew was not resorted to at all and there seemed to be finally a light at the end of the tunnel. The people, by now, however, were completely battered, and desperate for a change.

In May 1995, another stand-off was witnessed at Chrar-e-Sharief, this time between pro-Pakistan militants (who were less politically inclined, and more mercenary in their attitude) and the Indian Army.

Chrar-e-Sharief, the *ziarat* of Sheikh Nooruddin Wali which came to represent *Kashmiriyat* was taken over by

hardline militants, led by a Pakistani mercenary who called himself Mast Gul, sometime in December 1994. The Indian Army was called for help. But besides laying a cordon at a radius of 3 kilometres from the shrine, the Army did nothing. By March 1995 the government became alarmed because the militants were threatening to destroy the shrine.

A tense stand-off developed, and when the Army did decide to edge closer to the shrine, a gun battle ensued. The Army decided to smoke the militants out by setting fire to some houses behind the *ziarat*; either the militants then decided to torch the shrine and the adjoining mosque as well to create a cover for their escape, or else the fire started by Army went out of control and engulfed the holy places. Whatever may have been the cause of the blaze, Charar-e-Sharief was destroyed on 11 May 1995. Each Kashmiri Muslim was literally in shock.

While the Army was responsible for the incident in that it allowed it to happen, the people of the Valley came to realise that as Charar-e-Sharief was symbolic of *Kashmiriyat*, the incident was symbolic of the status of the movement. They came to realise that the militancy was going nowhere and accomplishing nothing, other than destroying their cultural identity, the very thing for which they had been waging their decades-long political battle. More and more people started to yearn for peace and for an end to the militancy.

Kashmiris were too stunned, for weeks, to express their grief. To many it seemed that again Pakistan and India had colluded, this time to destroy their spiritual identity (they had together destroyed the bulk of the JKLF, the emerging political identity in 1991). Clan rituals for most families centred around the Charar-e-Sharief *ziarat*, whether it had to do with the birth of a male child or marriage of a daughter. The synthesis of the Kashmiri Muslim's cultural identity had been focussed here more than five centuries earlier, and it was this very identity that had been at the centre of Kashmiri politics from

the beginning. Its importance during the separatist movement was demonstrated when, in March 1990, the people of the Valley experienced a change in mood, from being anti-Delhi to anti-India, and had marched to the Charar-e-Sharief. And now it has gone.

When asked, however, what the destruction of the shrine meant for Kashmiri Muslims, Farooq said: "Whoever burnt it thought that they could burn *Kashmiriyat*. But *Kashmiriyat* is not going to die. You cannot burn history. The structure may go, but the values never die. It is those values that will show us a better tomorrow."

The Future

The people of Kashmir have become tired of the armed struggle and, knowing that their future, for the moment, lies with India, want an honourable settlement.

Looking back, it seems clear that Delhi has alienated a people who were merely seeking to guard their cultural identity. Therefore, it is Delhi which must now take the lead in putting an end to the stepmotherly treatment Kashmir has been receiving in the past. Instead, sincere efforts must be made to soothe the people of the Valley with a healing touch, if Delhi is interested in retaining Kashmir as a satisfied part of the Republic of India.

The people of Kashmir have long since become alienated from Pakistan: they know that their cultural identity and political aspirations are not safe in that nation, despite its dubious claims to safeguarding the Muslim interest on the subcontinent. "Azad Kashmir" is proof enough of the

territorial ambitions Pakistan harbours. The general perception is perhaps best echoed by a Kashmiri Muslim who is a research scholar at the University of Kashmir: "All the Pakistanis want is our land and our women." Clearly, Kashmiris will never voluntarily go to Pakistan.

However, Delhi continues to make it difficult for the Kashmiris to re-enter the Indian mainstream by its continued human rights violations, even though these have come down dramatically since the Hazratbal crisis of 1993. The violations are necessarily an unfortunate byproduct of non-representative rule. So long as President's rule continues, so will human rights violations.

Obviously, then, the best solution is to restore a duly elected civilian government. Yet the history of betrayal and suspicion, since 1953, is far from reassuring, and the Kashmiri Muslims would want some guarantee (which will be difficult to recant) that satisfies their political aspirations and protects their cultural identity.

The well-known journalist Tavleen Singh has recently written that there is no point in turning the clock back — to 1965, to 1953, or to 1948. Perhaps history's clock is impossible to reset. What Kashmiri Muslims have reason to feel optimistic about is the fact that India has changed, is changing and will continue to change, gathering strength as it does.

For one thing, at the Centre no longer is a single family, with its attendant "coterie", comprising, in part, disgruntled Kashmiri Pandits, exerting an undue influence. The functioning of the government is becoming more and more democratic.

The largest political force working in India today is that of decentralisation. Both Farooq and Jyoti Basu (the West Bengal Chief Minister) had tried to push the historical force forward in 1983, but were momentarily stopped in their tracks. This process is now continuing.

Many Kashmiri Muslims have expressed the fear of a Hindu resurgence in India, which would make their staying within the Union impossible. They cite incidents like the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya on 6 December 1992, and the persecution of Muslims in some states under the Terrorism and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA). While it is true that a right wing force exists, and perhaps always will, it is equally true that there will always be a pro-Pakistan lobby in Kashmir, no matter how brutally the Army deals with the Jamaat-e-Islami.

However, in helping the forces of decentralisation and social empowerment to push forward, as they are historically destined to in a socio-economic environment like in India's, the Kashmiri Muslims have a definite role to play. This they cannot do from the outside; they have to play the game from within.

There has to be a meeting point for these two aspirations, emanating from diametrically opposed stands. Delhi has to give something, not in terms of a return to an earlier time such as 1953, but in terms of letting the people have a major say in running their own lives, a demand that has been reverberating all over the nation for decades.

Crises throw up opportunities: Kashmir can prove to be the catalyst to India's deciding to decentralise its governance. Already, the signs of the larger historical trends forcing this to happen are visible: the crumbling of the single monolithic political entity which has been ruling India at the Centre and in the states almost continuously since independence; the last Finance Commission's recommendations that the states be given a greater share of the tax revenues; and the trend of states adopting their own industrial policy in the wake of the economic liberalisation programme of the 1990s.

For the Kashmiri Muslims, there are two political entities which are currently vying for the right to represent their aspirations. One is Farooq Abdullah and the other is the "emerging leadership", comprising the moderate voices in the separatist movement.

These moderate voices, it may be noted, belong to the very people who spearheaded the movement when it was truly a people's movement, and were pushed aside when Pakistan wanted to bottle up the genie of independence. They include JKLF president Yasin Malik, who was released from prison in May 1994, and Shabir Shah, who was freed in October 1994.

These people have renounced violence, and have even stated the conditions under which they will negotiate for their people's peace (although these conditions have not yet been accepted by Delhi).

The moderates have their limitations, however. They live with the fear of the Kalashnikov: they may be eliminated by pro-Pakistan forces, which are inimical to their politics, and, thus, the leaders cannot articulate fully what they want. Also, having started an armed movement, they have burned their bridges, for they cannot now be seen to be hobnobbing with Delhi without the risk of being labelled hypocrites. This factor poses a genuine constraint to their dealings; the necessity to undertake a certain posture undermines the pursuance of intentions or aims they may harbour in the interests of their people.

Another option for the Kashmiris is Farooq Abdullah. There are some undeniable truths about him: he has administrative and political experience; he has access to all levels in Delhi; and he can deal with Delhi without appearing to be hypocritical.

It may be remembered that from the very beginning of his political career, Farooq has wanted to act as the bridge between Delhi and Srinagar.

The meeting point that was mentioned earlier in this chapter that Delhi and Kashmir have to arrive at can well be Farooq Abdullah. He can be the force that helps to strengthen the politics of secularism and decentralisation (the reasons Kashmir acceded to India in the first place) in their competition against the politics of the right wing in India. He

can also be the force which compels Delhi to move a step forward towards devolving various powers of governance to Kashmir, and hopefully starting a trend for the rest of the states.

On its part, the government needs to make reliable assurances to the Kashmiri people regarding their genuine desires and fears about the safeguarding of their cultural identity. The government can communicate these assurances through either Farooq Abdullah or the emerging leadership.

Certainly, Delhi would gain more credibility if it worked out a settlement with the moderate separatist leaders. They should be allowed to rule J&K if they want, notwithstanding the disastrous precedent set by the students who spearheaded the All-Assam Students' Union (AASU) agitation from 1979 to 1984 in Assam, and came to power as the Asom Gana Parishad from 1985 to 1990. (Their rule was so inefficient that the people brought back the wily Congressman Hiteswar Saikia in the next elections.)

However, if there is to be a settlement with the moderate separatist leaders, it cannot be done without Farooq Abdullah's cooperation. The constraints on the young leaders have already been mentioned; thus, Farooq Abdullah is the ideal meeting point.

In any case, even if Delhi decides to deal with the NC (which has been demanding autonomy), Farooq has made it clear that he would rather play a useful role in Delhi than become Chief Minister again. He has stated that though he would be more than willing to lead an election campaign for his party — his manifesto would focus on how he was able to obtain autonomy for Kashmir, while the separatists, who had promised *azaadi*, brought nothing but destruction and misery — he would then like to help the people of his state by being in Delhi. In his opinion, a veteran NC leader like Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah could become the Chief Minister of J&K.

In fact, when Farooq now envisages the Valley's future or his own future, he looks beyond J&K. With regard to the Kashmir Valley, he now considers much more than simply improving its political status within India; Farooq now talks of a confederation of the countries of South Asia, an idea floated by his father, Sheikh Abdullah, and Jawaharlal Nehru, before the Sheikh's inconclusive talks with then Pakistan President Ayub Khan in 1964.

"One of the things that emerged at that stage was the idea of a confederation of our nations," Farooq says. "I don't know how the nation will react to this, but the time has come for thinking of a relationship that can be worked out between India and Pakistan. We must start thinking of the future of the subcontinent."

As far as his own ambitions are concerned, they have apparently broadened following his exposure to the various United Nations conferences on human rights — at Vienna in June 1993, and in Geneva in February 1994 and February 1995 — where he defended India against sharp attacks by Pakistan on human rights. "These conferences gave me an opportunity to see how the world sees our problem," he recalls.

Having gained a wider perspective of international politics, it is perhaps not surprising that Farooq sees himself playing a major role in national politics. Who knows, we may one day see the world's most famous Kashmiri Muslim occupying Rashtrapati Bhavan.

"I assure you I won't die in the bathroom, but on the golf course", Farooq quips with his characteristic irreverence.

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NEWSPAPER

Kashmir Times, Srinagar.

Index

- Abdullah, Begum Akbar Jahan, 15-18, 21, 32, 37, 68, 102, 114, 118
 - as a mother, 18
 - as patron of National Conference, 139
- Abbas, Chaudhary Ghulam, 11, 21, 70
- Abdullah, Farooq
 - administrative weaknesses of, 207-8
 - and his father, 57-58
 - and his friends, 24-25
 - and Jawaharlal Nehru, 54-55
 - and Rubaiya Sayeed episode, 217-24
 - anti-Centre stand by, 124
 - arrest of, 41
 - as Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, 139-159
 - as a child, 18, 26
 - as a doctor, 62
 - as a golfer, 53
 - as a jail prisoner, 42-46
 - as a medical student, 51-53
 - as a member of J&K Cadet Corps, 38
 - as a Member of Parliament, 122, 130
 - as a playboy, 167-72
 - bureaucrats' views on, 153-54
 - character assassination of 168
 - dismissal of, 155-56, 166-67 183
 - education of, 19, 23-30
 - election as President of National Conference, 125, 127
 - fascination for Bombay film actresses, 168
 - incident with Shabana Azmi, 169-70
 - marriage of, 79, 170
 - meeting with Akali leaders, 143
 - meeting with Amanullah Khan, 80, 163
 - meeting with Arun Nehru, 96
 - meeting with Ayub Khan, 75
 - meeting with D.P. Dhar, 88-89

- meeting with Indira Gandhi, 87-88, 113-15, 145, 148
- meeting with Jagmohan, 165
- meeting with Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, 144-45
- meeting with Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, 72
- meeting with Rajiv Gandhi, 145-46, 149, 175-76
- meeting with Sardar Abdul Qayoom Khan, 84
- meeting with V.P. Singh, 218
- meeting with Zia-ul Haq, 150
- meeting with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, 85-87
- Nehru's death and, 74
- political education of, 39
- relationship with Indira Gandhi, 119
- succession in politics, 123, 127
- views on corrupt officers, 141
- views on Election Commission, 153
- views on Emergency, 96-99
- views on Jagmohan's tenure as Governor 226
- visit to "Azad Kashmir", 81-83
- visit to East Pakistan, 75, 80
- visit to Iraq and Saudi Arabia, 119
- Abdullah, Henna, 174
- Abdullah, Khalida, 15, 21, 26
- Abdullah, Mustafa, 15, 57
- Abdullah, Safiya, 174
- Abdullah, Sara, 174
- Abdullah, Sheikh Mohammad, 1-2, 10-11, 13, 15-16
 - and 'Naya Kashmir' programme, 33
 - and family, 18-21
 - and Jawaharlal Nehru, 11, 35-36, 67
 - and Kashmiri Muslims, 35
 - and Mohammad Ali Jinnah, 21
 - and tribals of NWFP, 31
 - anti-Centre tirade by, 129
 - as an administrator, 101
 - as President of J&K Muslim Conference, 15
 - as Prime Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, 14, 18
 - confrontation with Sanjay Gandhi, 120
 - conspiracy against, 116
 - conspiracy case against, 58
 - corruption charges against, 112, 126
 - death of, 138
 - demand for autonomy by, 125, 129
 - dialogues with Indira Gandhi, 80-81, 101, 104, 113, 136
 - dismissal of, 63, 88
 - illness of, 105-06, 134
 - imprisonment of, 2, 18, 20, 53-55, 57-58, 61, 78
 - marriage of, 15, 17
 - meeting with Ayub Khan, 71
 - meeting with Morarji Desai, 104
 - meeting with Zhou Enlai, 77
 - radical land reforms programme by, 2, 33-34
 - toppling of government by New Delhi, 2
 - views on Emergency, 99
 - views on M. A. Beg, 117
 - visit to Algeria, 77
 - visit to Dacca, 80
 - visit to Pakistan, 69-71
 - visit to Saudi Arabia, 77

- Abdullah, Suraiya, 15, 47
 Abdullah, Tariq, 15, 27, 47, 68, 114
 Abdullah, Umar, 174
 Abidin, Zainul, 7
 Ahmed, Qazi Nissar, 181-82
 arrest of, 181
 charges against, 181
 Ahmed, Sheikh Nazir, 28
 Aligarh Muslim University, 10
 Ali, Chief Justice Murtaza Fazal, 94
 Altaf, Mohammad, 217
 Alva, Margaret, 130
 Amla, T.R., 135
 Anandpur Sahib Resolution, 144
 Anjuman Tahafuz-ul Islami, 180
 Ansari, Moulvi Abbas, 180
 Ansari, Moulvi Iftakar, 105, 164, 166
 Ansari, Zubair, 161
 Auqaf Trust, 63
Aurad-i-Fathiyya, 6
 Azad, Ghulam Nabi, 119, 126
 "Azad Kashmir", 13, 71, 73, 76-77, 80-81, 83-84, 86, 133, 163, 189, 192, 193, 209, 226, 233, 240
 Azmi, Shabana, 168

 Babri Masjid, 242
 destruction of, 242
 Badal, Parkash Singh, 143
 Bahuguna, H.N., 126
 Bakaia, Pandit Krishan, 24
 Bakshi, Shakeel, 93
 Bande, Hissamuddin, 137, 150
 Bannerjee, Sir Albion, 10
 Bari, Maulana Abdul, 188
 Barnala, Surjit Singh, 143
 Baruah, Dev Kant, 95
 Basu, Jyoti, 126, 241

 Bazaz, Prem Nath, 11
 Beghseri, Mohammad Shafi, 70
 Beg, Mirza Mohammad Afzal, 37, 58, 61, 70, 79, 92, 100, 107, 115-16, 127
 charges against, 116
 death of, 117
 Bhardwaj, Thakur Pavitar Singh, 162
 Bhat, M.L., 220
 Bhindranwale, Jarnail Singh, 144-45
 Bhutto, Zulfikar Ali, 70, 79, 85-87, 187
 execution of, 151, 187
 meeting with Farooq Abdullah, 85-87
 Brahmachari, Dharendra, 118
 Buch, Yusuf, 85
 Bulganin, Nikolai, 56
 Butt, G.M., 137, 217
 Butt, Maqbool, 80, 160-61, 217
 execution of, 161-62
 rearrest of, 162

 Chakan, Ghulam Mohammad, 107
 Chand, General Diwan, 8
 Chaubal, Devyani, 168
 Chavan, S.B., 100, 148
 Chinese aggression, 62
 Char-e-Sharief, 3, 6, 229
 Army's role at, 238
 as a spiritual centre, 6
 destruction of, 237-38
 Council of Regency, 9
 reforms by, 9
 Cripps, Sir Stafford, 12

 Dar, Ajaz Ahmad, 208
 Ded, Lal, 6
 Delhi Agreement, 35-36

- Desai, Morarji, 103-04
 Dhar, Dr. D.P., 35, 66, 88-90
 Dhar, P.N., 87
 Dhingra, Suresh, 53
 Dilshad, 170
 "Dithene", Mohammad Iqbal, 154, 166
 Diwani, Abdul Hamid, 162
 Dixon, Sir Owen, 34
 Dogra, Girdhari Lal, 40, 202-03
 Draconian Press Bill, 212
 Dukhtaran-e-Millat, 217
- Edmonds, Phil, 25, 72, 73
 Elahi, Chaudhury Fazal, 75, 84
- Farooqi, Justice Bahauddin, 158
 Farooq, Mirwaiz Moulvi, 64, 66, 151, 186, 219
 murder of, 230
 patch-up with Farooq Abdullah, 151
 Fotedar, M.L., 118, 201
- Ganai, Ahmed, 19
 Gandhi, Indira, 50, 85, 101, 116, 118, 124, 163
 actions against Sheikh Abdullah, 124
 death of, 172
 defeat in elections of 1977, 103
 election campaign (in J&K) by, 118, 151-52
 imposition of Emergency by, 96
 Gandhi, Mahatma, 20-22
 Gandhi, Rajiv, 126, 145, 172, 174, 235
 defeat in elections, 206
 entry into politics, 126
 Farooq's views on, 146
 visit to Jammu & Kashmir, 136
- Gandhi, Sanjay, 97, 103, 120, 172
 death of, 120
 role in J&K affairs, 120
 Ganjoo, N.K., 209
 militants' attack on, 209
 murder of, 213
 Ghani, Abdul, 181
 Ghazni, Mahmud, 4
 Gilani, Pir Maqbool, 70
 Gilani, Syed Abdul Qadir, 70
 Gilani, Syed, Ali Shah, 180
 Gill, K.P.S., 228
 Glancy Commission, 10
 Goel, B.K., 53
 Goswami, B.K., 206
 Gujral, I.K., 114, 222
 Gul, Mast, 238
- Haksar, P.N., 163
 Halwai, Mohammad Yusuf, killing of, 212
 Hamadani, Maulvi Ahmadullah, 41-43
 Hamdani, Mir Sayid Ali, 6-7
 Handoo, P.L., 166, 206
 Haq, Zia-ul, 150, 187, 188, 189
 as President of Pakistan, 187
 Farooq Abdullah's views on, 150
 role in Kashmir affairs, 189
 statement on Kashmir, 150
 Hasrat, Sardar Rashid, 193
 Hazratbal shrine, 62, 123, 150, 233, 236
 army's action at, 236-37
 disappearance of holy relic from, 63-66
 reconstruction of, 112-13
 Hekmatyar, Gulbuddin, 195
 Hizbul Mujahideen, 195, 230

- Ibrahim, Sheikh Mohammad, 28
 Indian National Congress, 9, 11
 Non-Cooperation Movement by, 9
 Inquilabi, Azam, 93
 Inquilabi National Conference, 117
 formation of, 117
 Instrument of Accession, 13, 20
 signing of, 13
 Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), 185-96
 Iqbal, Dr. Mohammad, 15
 Islamic Students' League, 181
 Islam, Sheikh Tajamul, 137
 arrest of, 137

 J&K Muslim Conference, 10-11, 15
 Jaan, Dr. Mohammad Ali, 105
 Jagmohan, 164, 166, 180, 203-04, 225
 reappointment as Governor, 226
 role in J&K affairs, 165-66, 180
 Jaitly, Ashok, 155, 207
 Jamaat-e-Ahl-e-Hadis, 180
 Jamaat-e-Islami, 23, 137, 180, 220
 protests by, 137
 Jamaat-e-Talaba, 125, 157, 180
 demands by, 125
 Islamic revolution by, 137
 Jammu & Kashmir Resettlement Bill, 133, 151
 controversy over, 133-34, 141-42
 passing of, 154

 Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), 2, 80, 190
 setting up of "suicide squads" by, 194
 threats by, 162, 212
 Janata Party, 103-04
 Jang, Ali Yavar, 99
 Farooq's meeting with, 99
 Javed, Sheikh, 24, 170
 Jawaharlal Mountaineering Institute, 148
 Jha, L.K., 101, 142, 163
 Jinnah, Mohammad Ali, 11-12, 20-21
 as Governor-General of Pakistan, 12
 and Sheikh Abdullah, 21
 Jullundari, Hafiz, 70

 Kabli, A.R., 65, 124, 209
 Kalwal, Noor Mohammad, 217
 Kar, Ghulam Rasool, 206
 Karra, Ghulam Mohiuddin, 41-42
 Karra, Mahmooda, 26, 64
Kashmiriyat, 7, 11, 14, 124, 238
 Kashmiri Muslims, 1-3, 6, 8-10, 14
 cultural identity of, 1-2, 7, 14, 21, 35, 60, 63, 79, 161, 229, 238-39
 grievances of, 10
 rebellion by, 8
 revolt against Dogra rule by, 12
 struggle by, 20
 Kashmiri Pandits, 8-9, 34
 administration by, 9
 Kashmir Liberation Army (KLA), 161
 Kashmir Movement, 1, 8, 14
 Kastiwal, Dr. R.N., 52

- Kaul, T.N., 96
 Khalid, Vaizhakkulangrayll, 158
 Khan, Amanullah, 80-81, 84, 161
 arrest of, 191
 meeting with Farooq Abdullah, 80
 release of, 192
 Khan, Arif Mohammad, 153, 221-22
 Khan, Field Marshal Ayub, 69, 79
 Khan, General Abdul Akhtar Rehman, 185, 187
 Khan, Khan Abdul Ghaffar, 71
 Khan, Sardar Abdul Qayoom, 84
 Khan, Shafi, 41
 Khan, Wali, 71
 Khrushchev, Nikita, 56
 Kidwai, Medhat, 44
 Kitchlu, Bashir, 65
 Kochak, G.N., 137

 Latram, Mushtaq, 213
 Lone, Abdul Gani, 101, 105, 129, 166
 Longowal, Sant H.S., 143

 Mahaaz-e-Azaadi, 93
 Malik, Mohammad Yasin, 112, 217, 243
 Maqbool, Sheikh Mohammad, 28
 Masoodi, Maulana Mohammad Syed, 13, 61, 64, 70, 110
 Mattoo, Ghulam Rasool, 131
 Mehta, Asoka, 61
 Mehta, Om, 100, 130-31

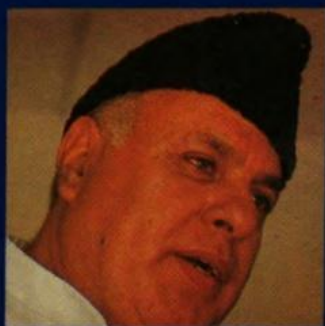
 Menon, V.P., 13
 Mhatre, Ravindra, 161
 murder of, 161
 Mir, Dilawar, 137
 Mir, Javed Ahmed, 213
 Mohammad, Bakshi Ghulam, 37, 40, 42, 48, 66, 116
 Mohammad, Noor, 15
 Mohiuddin, Sheikh Ghulam, 78, 137, 206
 Mookherjee, Shyama Prasad, 38
 Mountbatten, Edwina, 32
 Mountbatten, Lord Louis, 13, 32
 Mukherjee, Pranab, 130, 175
 Mullick, B.N., 50
 Musa, General Mohammad, 71
 Muslim League, 21
 Muslim United Front (MUF), 181
 role of, 181-82

 Nair, K. Shankaran, 149
 Namgyal, P., 205-06
 Naqshbandi, Khwaja Mubarak Shah, 70
 National Conference, 95, 100-101, 103, 107, 121, 149
 election campaign by, 107
 factionalism in, 115
 winning of elections by, 108
 Nayar, Kuldip, 152
 Nedou, Michael Harry, 16-17
 Nehru, Arun, 126, 201
 Nehru, B.K., 134, 163, 165
 Nehru, Jawaharlal, 11, 13, 27, 33, 66
 and Hazratbal incident, 66
 and Sheikh Abdullah, 11
 death of, 93

 Opposition conclave in Srinagar, 152
 Indira Gandhi's annoyance with, 159

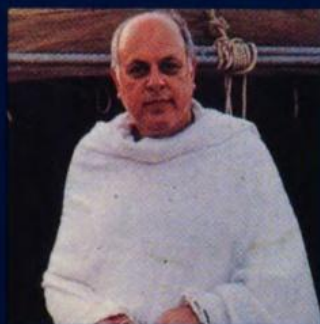
- Pakistan, 1, 3, 11
 and proxy war strategies, 185-96
 martial law in, 187
 wars with India, 11, 79, 186
 Pandit Ghulam Jhilani, 206
 Pant, K.C., 149
 Parthasarathy, G., 80, 92, 163-64
 Patel, Rajni, 100
 Patnaik, Biju, 126
 People's League, 93, 157, 181, 194
 Pilot, Rajesh, 177, 202-03
 Farooq's discussions with, 177
 Plebiscite Front, 61, 80-81, 92, 95
 renaming of, 92, 95
 split in, 92-93
 Praja Socialist Party (PSP), 61
 Prashant, D.C., 131
 Pritcher, Molly, 78, 92, 171, 209
 marriage with Farooq Abdullah, 79
 Puri, Balraj, 104
- Qadir, Ghulam, 32
 Qasim, Syed Mir, 92, 95, 101, 130, 131
 Quit India Movement, 1942, 11
 "Quit Kashmir" Movement, 11 20
 Qureshi, Hashim, 163
 Qureshi, Mohammad Shafi, 152, 160, 204-05
- Rajatarangini* (River of Kings), 4
 Ram, Jagjivan, 107
 Rao, General K.V. Krishna, 211, 237
 Rao, Narasimha, 236
 Rao, N.T. Rama, 176
 meeting with Farooq, 176
- Rasool, Sheikh Ghulam, 199
 Rather, A.R., 206
 Raza, Moosa, 206
 Reading, Lord, 9
 Rehmani, Farooq, 33
 Rehman, Mehmood-ur, 154
 Rehman, Mujibur, 80
 Rekha, 168
 Farooq's views on, 171
 Restoration of Holy Relic Action Committee, 64-65
 Roy, Rammohan, 4
- Sadiq, Ghulam Mohammad, 42, 66
 Saduddin, Maulana, 188
 Sahib, Pir, 17
 Saifullah, Zafar, 207
 Salve, N.K.P., 200
 Sarabhai, Mridula, 49, 90, 174
 and Farooq's Abdullah, 49-52
 death of, 90
 Saraf, Sham Lal, 40
 Saxena, G.C., 160, 237
 Saxena, J.N., 227-28
 Sayeed, Mufti Mohammad, 102-03, 119, 121, 128, 149, 176-77, 201, 214, 221
 and the Rubaiya kidnapping episode, 217-24
 Sayeed, Rubaiya, 216
 kidnapping of, 216-17
 release of, 223-24
 Seshan, T.N., 222
 Sethi, P.C., 126, 164
 Shafi, Mohammad, 166
 Shah, Ghulam Mohammad, 41, 115-16, 126-27, 134, 137, 143, 147, 158, 164, 166-67, 176, 209
 Indira Gandhi's attitude against, 135
 sacking of, 138

- Shah, Bulbul, 5
 Shah, Ghulam Din, 137
 Shah, Khwaja Mubarak, 70
 Shah, Maulvi Yusuf, 10, 182, 183
 Shah, Shabir, 93, 105, 194, 210, 212
 arrest of, 212
 release of, 243
 Shah, Sultan Yusuf, 7, 11, 21, 41, 64
 Shamim, Shamim Ahmed, 97, 102, 104, 105
 Shankar, Jyoti, 53
 Shankar, Shiv, 142
 Sharif, Nawaz, 233
 Shastri, Lal Bahadur, 66, 76, 186
 Sheikh, Abdul Hamid, 217, 219
 Shekhar, Chandra, 235
 Sikand, Dr. Prem, 108
 Simla Agreement, 187
 Singh, Balwant, 143
 Singh, Buta, 199, 204
 Singh, Charan, 104
 Singh, Darbara, 147
 Singh, Dr. Karan, 27, 35, 95, 114-15, 125, 140-41
 Singh, Giani Zail, 133, 147
 election as President of India, 136
 visit to Jammu & Kashmir, 133
 Singh, Gulab, 8-9
 Singh, Gurmukh Nihal, 51
 Singh, Hari, 10-14, 18, 20, 27, 35
 Singh, Joginder, 227
 Singh, Kashmir, 131
 Singh, Master Tara, 143
 Singh, Pratap, 9
 Singh, Ranjit, 8-9
 death of, 8
 Singh, V.P., 201, 214, 235
 Srinagar Declaration, 157
 Stevenson, Adlai, 36
 Students and Youth League, 65, 93
 Students' Federation, 103
 Sultan, Rukhsana, 172
 Farooq's meeting with, 172
 Takkar, R.K., 207
 Taploo, Tikka Lal, 212
 murder of, 212
 Terrorism and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA), 242
 persecution of Muslims under, 242
 Thakur, Devi Das, 94, 104, 116, 118, 135, 141, 143, 158
 Thakur, Mohammad Ayub, 195
 Tiwari, N.D., 98
 Tohra, Gurcharan Singh, 143
 Treaty of Amritsar, 9
 United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), 224
 kidnappings by, 224
 United Muslims Front (UMF), 180
 Uprethi, Dr. S.P., 53
 Uri, Mohammad Shafi, 206
 Vajpayee, Atal Behari, 104, 126, 234
 Venkataraman, R., 223
 Wali, Sheikh Nooruddin (Nund Rishi), 6-7
 Wani, Ashfaq Majid, 217, 219
 Wattali, Ali Mohammad, 208
 militants' attack on, 208-9
 Waza, Abdul Ahad, 217
 Yunus, Mohammad, 99
 Ziauddin, Mufti, 15



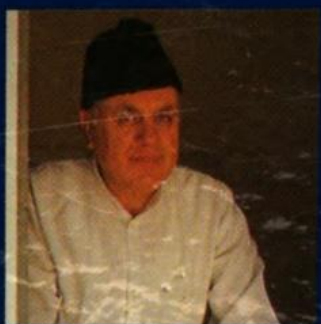
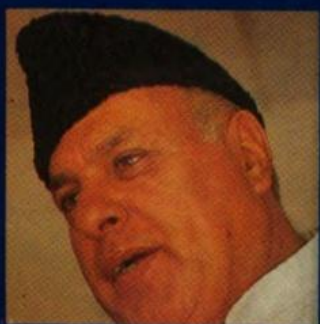
"Our patience has been exhausted to the limit and if justice is not done, the bridge which links us with India will be broken."

"Whoever burnt the Chrar-e-Sharief thought that they could burn *Kashmiriyat*. But *Kashmiriyat* is not going to die. You cannot burn history. The structure may go, but the values never die. It is those values that will show us a better tomorrow."



"I'm sick of repeating *ad nauseam* that I am an Indian and that Kashmir's accession to India is irreversible. Why don't the Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu or Maharashtra have to say the same thing?"

"My message to the Muslims of India, especially those in Kashmir: Please do not think that beyond the hill the grass is greener. Wherever you are, and in whatever condition you are, at least you are in your own home.... By striving together we can ensure a bright and prosperous future."



"I am the last person to like being jailed. What am I going to do in there? You may suggest that I read books to while away the time, but I would not like to do that because reading puts pressure on my eyes."

